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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



"AND TO THINK OF ALL YOU HAVE GONE THROUGH, AND I NEVER KNEW!" SAID NORMAN, IN A TONE OF REGRET.

A TRUE FRIEND.

[A NOVELETTE.]

(Concluded.)

CHAPTER IV.

ANOTHER brilliant, smiling June morning, with a blue and silver sky, and a broad sweep of sunshine pouring down upon the world.

A day that makes one long for the sweet, fresh country, with bluebell-studded banks, vivid green woods and hawthorn hedges, where one can walk on the soft springy young grass instead of the hard, hot, dusty pavement, and breathe the fragrant air, and feel as young and strong and glad as the world in its early summer hey-day.

Even the parks and Kensington-gardens are looking green and sunny; the summer's dust has not had time to veil and dry out their gay new verdure; the lilacs and laburnums are nearly over; but all the balconies are filled with fresh

flowers, and girls are sitting here and there along the streets, with great piles of sweet spring blossoms before them.

But excepting that the sun is coming in at the windows, making the room seem closer and stiffer, and unsettling little ever-wandering minds by reminding them of the world outside, it might be very seasonable in the bare, unlovely schoolroom where Cecile King is sitting.

She has been governess at Lady Churchill's for three months; and in spite of a brave, bright spirit, and earnestly-pointed will, she finds it very difficult indeed to force herself into this new groove so as to fit it comfortably.

The *peine forte et dure* of the beginning is over; the pain of telling her parents that she had resolved to act in spite of their opposition, of braving her father's anger, and her mother's reproaches.

"You are disgracing yourself and all of us," said Mr. King. "You have ruined my prospects. Who will think of giving a gentleman's post to me when they hear that my only child has gone into service! Yes, it is no better. You will be paid like a housemaid, and are liable to getting a month's warning; you must submit to rules and

regulations; go out and stay in when your mistress pleases; work all day at teaching or making yourself generally useful; smile and look pleased when it is expected of you; put up with scolding and snubbing and insult all day!"

"Oh, Cecile!" wailed her mother; "what am I to do all alone here in this dreary street, without a soul near me to speak to! It is so dreadful to think of it! What will you do if any of our old friends meet you at Lady Churchill's in such a position! You are so impatient—if you had only waited all would have been well."

Mrs. King's once low, refined voice had become high-pitched and shrill by continual complaining; it began to jar upon Cecile's sensitive ear, though she scolded herself for her hardness and want of sympathy in feeling irritable at the sound.

"You see, mother, dear," she said, cheerfully, "you cannot do without all the little luxuries that you are used to, and my seventy pounds a-year will go a long way to help buy them for you. And by-and-by papa will get something very good, and then I shall come home, and we will go to a nice home."

"No use after this mad exploit of yours,

Cecile. There is something indelible in being a governess. It will be remembered against you all your life. People will say she was Lady Churchill's governess. And we hoped you would marry so well! Ah, Cecile, I don't reproach you for it; and if you had only not been such a child in your ways you might have married brilliantly before our misfortunes came, and then you at least would have been safe!"

This was the first allusion she had made to her hope that Lord Armstead would have married Cecile.

The girl did not know to what her mother was alluding, as she had never dreamed that anybody had thought of such a thing; but she herself, suddenly for one instant, thought: What if she had married Lord Armstead! Would it have made any difference? Would he have saved them from ruin?

But she only thought of it as a problem; not for one moment as having been a possibility.

Lady Churchill was a sweet, kind woman, as fond of Cecile as she had time to be. She had been attracted by the bright, young face, and pleased to have one so very refined and accomplished, and yet so simple and girlish for a companion for her dull, delicate girls.

They had masters who came periodically to the house for music and languages; but Cecile was expected to help them prepare lessons, and to talk in French to them all day, as well as give the usual lessons in English.

It was heavy, uninteresting work, for Bertha and Lina would not even do their small best to make Cecile's task lighter.

They hated everything, and would only grumble at the bondage in which they were kept, while Fanny and Flora rode and drove and danced the days and nights away.

"But your turn will come," Cecile would say. "Your sisters did lessons once."

But she had not always the heart to improve the occasion by representing that the more they attended now to their lessons and the formation of the mind the more they would shine when they burst from their chrysalis state.

She felt sorry for the poor, plain, sickly twins to whom a gay, careless, changeful life stood so near, and who were unable to get to taste its sweets, and never would be able to taste them to the full as their pretty elder sisters were doing.

Bertha and Lina were sixteen; next to them came two Eton boys, then two lovely golden-haired girls, and a round, rosy, plump boy, who made mirth and sunshine come into Cecile's life.

She had entire charge of the three, and found even their naughtiness a delightful change from the dullness and apathy of the twins. She had never been used to children; but a great love for them had lain dormant in her heart all this time, and now it poured forth its floods upon them.

She felt so dreadfully inclined to play with them instead of teach them; to laugh when they were noisy and unruly; to excuse lessons when great tears would come into Muriel's blue eyes at the sight of a column of spelling, when Evelyn would look dolefully at her music, and stop every three minutes to hear if the church clock in the square had not chimed the half-hour that would bring release.

Roy was only eight, so she was not expected to teach him much, only to make him be good and tolerably quiet, to relieve the two nurses, who were fully occupied by five little toddling miscreants; for Sir Francis Churchill was not rich, and had fourteen children, of whom the eldest was only nineteen; so a good deal of nurse's work fell to the share of the governess, who, in her turn, was supplemented by occasional masters.

This warm, sunny day was one of the grey, sunless days of Cecile's life. The twins were not well. They had caught cold a few days before. So the windows were not opened, and the schoolroom was unbearably close. Muriel was practising; that is to say, she was trying to play an easy arrangement of the overture to the *Crown Diamonds*.

The younger ones used up the old music of

Fanny and Flora, and Cecile often longed to see a nice fresh new piece on the piano, by Schubert or Schumann; it would have been so much more interesting teaching them than those yellow, torn and pencil-fingered pieces.

Muriel played in a manner most exasperating to be heard by anyone who wanted to attend to something else. She played at least one wrong note in every bar; she galloped through the easy bars and laboured through the difficult ones, now and then skipping one altogether.

Cecile was trying to teach Evelyn a French verb, to keep Roy's attention confined to his sums, and now and then to answer the twins, who referred to her for a German word to save themselves the trouble of looking in the dictionary.

"Muriel, that is a sharp—play the bar again. No, dear; you cannot say *je finais*, it is *je finissais*. Go on! Yes, Lina, 'dear' sends the verb to the end, and it must be in the subjunctive—you know that quite well! Oh, Muriel! do try and do better; you are not attending to your notes!"

Here the door opened and Lady Churchill came in.

"How hot and tired you all look!" she said. "Muriel, we can hear all your wrong notes in the drawing-room. Would it not be better if you sat beside her, Miss King? She seems to be stumbling terribly through the piece."

Poor Cecile was always dreadfully discouraged by Lady Churchill's visits to the schoolroom. She felt so guilty, as if Muriel might have been a perfect pianist by now, had it not been for the inexperience and inattention of her governess; as if Lady Churchill would blame her and send her away, and refuse to recommend her to anybody else.

But Lady Churchill meant to be as kind as possible. She was only stupid, and wanted to say something; and never reflected for a moment that she might say the wrong thing, instead of something pleasant.

She looked over Lina's shoulder at her German exercise, said that Bertha was pale, kissed Roy and laughed at his clumsy figures, and then went on to say what had brought her.

"Would you care to go to the opera to-night, Miss King? I find that the girls have promised to go to the Haymarket with Mr. and Mrs. Atkinson; and here has my sister sent word that they cannot use their box to-night at Her Majesty's, and she thought I should like to go to hear Nilsson in *Faust*. I shall be so glad if you will go with us."

Cecile's face glowed like a summer sunrise, then suddenly clouded, as she said,—

"Thank you, so much, Lady Churchill; I think I would rather stay at home. Perhaps Bertha and Lina will be well enough to go."

Lady Churchill's face clouded, too, for a subject was revived that had been a cause of disagreement between them. It was one of the difficulties of Cecile's position that Lady Churchill wanted to be so very kind, and to make her quite one of the family, letting her remember as little as possible that she was on a dependent footing in the house.

So she always asked Cecile to come into the drawing-room when there was a party, though there might not be room for her at the dinner-table; and Cecile, to her annoyance, almost always refused.

If she did come she wore shabby, old dresses—at least, they looked so amongst the brilliant toilettes of the present season; and Cecile scarcely had a salary quite sufficient to buy herself new dresses.

Lady Churchill felt vexed and injured. Cecile understood quite well now why she did; though she had been puzzled at first, thinking her pretty white cashmere, and her delicate Nile-green silk the best and freshest of her evening dresses—quite presentable enough to sit in a corner or to play accompaniments in.

How could she buy dresses when her mother was pining in her lonely little house for so many little things that were now beyond her reach?

And she could not explain to Lady Churchill, and reveal what she knew her father and mother

were so anxious to keep secret—their extreme poverty, and the necessity there was for Cecile's money to keep the house going.

Mr. King had at last condescended to accept a post in a merchant's office that brought in two hundred a year; and still he grumbled at the small house and the inexperienced servants.

Alas! Lord Armstead's two hundred pounds had all gone. Bills had come in for meals, food, and gas, taxes, rates, wages, cab-fares—one thing after another—and no supplies from the master of the house to meet the never-ceasing demand.

He ordered in provisions, never thinking of the cost. The bills came to Mrs. King, who gave them in her frightened way to Cecile, trusting in her to see that they were paid somehow and some time.

She knew no more about money than a child—how it came and how it went. Cecile took each new bill with a heavy heart, kept it for a week or two, still hoping for money from her father; then the burden of debt was too heavy to carry, so she would go to the diminishing board in her dressing-case and pay it.

She must have money, or it seemed hard for her mother to be left alone with her husband, who never had a kind or hopeful word to say when he was in the house.

She had no friends near. Those of her old life did not come; some believing that Mr. King did not wish to be found out in his retirement, others not caring sufficiently for them to make the pilgrimage to Beaconsfield-street. The people in the neighbourhood held aloof, knowing that the Kings held themselves much too high to associate with them; so the little house was almost as complete a solitude as a cell in the Thebaid, and Mrs. King wept and lamented her days away.

But Cecile went to the opera, and looked so bright and pretty in her white cashmere, with roses in her hair and at her neck, and the glow of happy anticipation in her face, that Lady Churchill smiled approvingly when she saw her.

It was so new to Cecile to find herself in that brilliant theatre, the circles round and round as full of light and colour and beauty as the stage.

Lady Churchill was very kind, and told her who a great many people were. She forgot her troubles for a time, in the delight of the hour.

Then came the opera—the lovely music, the thrilling story; Nilsson's marvellous voice, most perfect of German peasant-maidens; Trebelli, dark and piquant, most charming of Siebels.

Cecile leant forward with glowing cheeks and dilated eyes, losing herself utterly in Marguerite's woes. Then, turning at the end of the church scenes to meet a glance of sympathy from Lady Churchill, she saw, or rather became conscious, that a man in the stalls was looking intently at her.

For a moment the light faded out of her face; all Gretchen's sorrow had vanished, only her own real troubles stood out from the background.

Then she smiled a happy contented smile, glad that Lord Armstead had come back; now surely he would bring good luck with him!

Lady Churchill had noticed this change of expression, and followed Cecile's eyes till she discovered the tall, distinguished-looking man in the stalls.

She did not know him even by sight, and wondered greatly why the sight of him should stir up emotion of such complex kind.

For a moment she thought it must be someone who had had an evil influence over Cecile's life, and who had her in his power; for she read a great many novels, and this looked very like a bit of one of them.

But she saw the smile that followed the first paling of extreme surprise; and then she wove a love-story out of her romantic brain, all in two or three seconds.

Had an old lover turned up; one thought to be dead or gone for ever! Had he forsaken Cecile in her poverty? Yes, that was the most likely thing. So in her kind, sentimental heart there was raging quite a little storm of indignant feeling against the innocent stranger.

She knew very little about Cecile's former life;

she was too busy to find time for curious questioning.

She was always visiting, or shopping, or driving, or receiving, or attending committee meetings, or going to church; for she was very High Church, and went every afternoon to Margaret-street, when she was not otherwise engaged. She only knew that the Kings had been very rich indeed, living in first-rate style, and that they had come down with a tremendous crash, owing to something about mines. But to-night she had time to ask questions, and really felt a rather interest in her fair young governess.

"Is that an old friend?" she asked, after Cecile had bowed and recovered her composure. "I do not remember his face. Perhaps he does not come up to town; and yet he does not look like a stay-at-home country squire."

"It is Lord Armstead," said Cecile, still smiling happily. "He lived near us at home. He has been abroad a long time. I did not know he had returned."

Lady Churchill was rather disappointed. An earl was not at all likely to be in love with and marry her governess—most likely he was married already. And she did not quite like Cecile having a boxing acquaintance with an earl. It would make her forget or despise her duties.

"Ah," she said, "I have heard of him. Rather eccentric, is he not? One never meets him anywhere. Is his wife with him?"

"He is not married!" said Cecile, a flush of surprise overspreading her face.

"Poor little thing," thought Lady Churchill, half superciliously; "she has evidently been in love with him in the old days. A man much older than herself, I fancy, who has very likely amused himself and made a fool of her."

So she said no more about Lord Armstead, thinking it the truest kindness, not to take any notice.

And Cecile forgot all about Marguerite and Faust and Siebel, in the terrible remembrance that she had spent Lord Armstead's money, and could never hope to repay it!

In the crush outside—when they were waiting for the carriage—she came up to them, smiling joyfully, with outstretched hand. He had no idea who Cecile's friends were, and how she happened to be with them; and was slightly surprised when she introduced him to Lady Churchill. He gave his arm to Cecile, and put her into the carriage; but there was neither time nor opportunity for any private conversation.

"I shall call on Mrs. King to-morrow," he said, as the carriage was slowly moving on; then he was lost in the crowd and darkness.

It made Cecile feel so very happy to have spoken to him, and touched his arm, and seen his kind, affectionate eyes.

Lady Churchill talked to her husband until they reached home; where they deposited Cecile, and went on to a reception.

Cecile went straight to her room, threw open the window, and sat down to think. The stars were all shining in the summer sky with pale, uncertain gleam, for the sunset lights had scarcely faded away from the June twilight. The air was cool, and fragrant with the scent of the flowers below. The great city lay all round, dark, and almost silent.

Cecile by the window, in her white dress, sat on in a happy waking dream; not actively thinking, only enjoying the restful content that Lord Armstead's presence had brought to her. She was no longer friendless and alone; she had a pillar of strength to lean upon.

He was so rich, so great, so strong; he must be able to help them, if he would. He would at least go and see her mother, and brighten her life for a little time; and surely he would advise her father; if not exact himself to get him a good appointment.

She sat on for so long that she was aroused at last by the noise of returning wheels; then she saw that the eastern sky was flushing in the dawn of a new summer day.

She heard Fanny and Flora laughing and chattering on the stairs; then bedroom doors were shut, and all was silent, and she went to bed to dream that she was wandering along the corridors

at Armstead Castle with Norman Leigh in an admiral's uniform.

Lady Churchill liked the children to take their daily walk directly after the schoolroom breakfast on these hot summer days. It was a time of keen enjoyment to Cecile, who felt quite like a country girl again as she walked on the soft green grass of Kensington-gardens, beneath the umbrageous trees, drinking in the fresh morning air, and the scent of the grass and trees, from which the dew had scarcely departed.

Here, two mornings after the night at the opera, they met Lord Armstead—one of whose eccentricities was early rising.

Roy and Evelyn had lagged behind, but were in sight; Muriel was walking with Cecile. He looked extremely surprised to see her, and much puzzled by the presence of the children.

Cecile greeted him with a smile like the very essence of the summer morning. He did not stand but walked on by her side, talking of the opera, then of his travels; waiting till Muriel should leave them to discuss the subjects on which they were both longing to open their hearts.

A new light had come into her grey life—a warm, gladdening flood like the sunshine that was bathing the gardens in its radiance. Her blood ran faster through her veins, her eyes danced and sparkled as they used to do; and all this was not a bit because she had grown to love Lord Armstead—in his sense of the word—only because she liked him and trusted him, and was so pleased that a piece of her old life had come to stir her up and remind her that she was a girl, and not a tired, weary-hearted woman bowing under a load of care.

And Lord Armstead misunderstood it all. A wild hope sprang up in his heart that at last his patience had conquered, that a fair flower had burst into blossom, whose seed must have been hidden unsuspected all this time; but he could say nothing with all those little pitchers about with their long ears.

He only alluded vaguely to his visit to Mrs. King, saying he had found her looking very delicate, and was afraid she must be dull without her daughter.

He did not say that, when he had mentioned having met Cecile at the theatre with the Churchills, she had answered in a nervous, flurried manner, guiltily flushing, "Oh, yes! they are new friends of—ours; Cecile is very fond of Lady Churchill," and said nothing about teaching.

He understood it perfectly well now, seeing Cecile's manner of authority with the children, and how they asked her leave, and called her Miss King.

At last he found that a *l'été à l'été* was impossible. Evelyn and Roy joined them, and even consecutive conversation was over.

Saying—

"I shall see you again," he took leave, and time being up, Cecile took her charges home and resumed her daily duties with a braver, lighter heart.

Of course the children told their mother of the *rencontre* in Kensington-gardens. She asked particulars, and heard that it was Lord Armstead who had walked with them for so long. She did not like it; it was altogether out of place; and yet there was no saying what might happen.

It would not do to offend Cecile. The best plan would be to turn the course of Lord Armstead's attentions into a new, but more suitable channel. So she sent him cards for her parties, hoping that the interest he seemed to take in Cecile would prove the beginning of an interest in those who were proximate to her, and at last settle and confine itself to an undivided and definite interest in Fanny or Flora.

CHAPTER V.

BUT a day or two of unrelieved monotony put out the new sunlight in Cecile's life. It was just as hard as ever to see Fanny and Flora go for their rides in the Row, and their endless dances—to see their pretty new dresses,

and to hear distant echoes of the gay, light-hearted world outside the schoolroom-door, and remember that this was to have been her first season.

The lessons were as wearisome and uninteresting as ever. Evelyn's false notes as abundant, Bertha as listless and cross, Roy and Muriel unsettled by the fine weather, and longing for holidays.

Then came a grand flower-show, and they all went—Lady Churchill, her come-out daughters, and the children.

Cecile begged off. She never could endure to go to those places in charge of the little ones like a nurse; it was so much worse than staying away altogether to be amongst all those merry, well-dressed, happy girls, and yet not of them.

So she asked for a holiday, and went to see her mother.

"Oh, child!" cried Mrs. King, when she entered the hot, common-looking drawing-room; "I thought you were never coming again! I am sure I'm ill; I cannot get about at all! I shall die in this horrible street!"

Cecile soothed and caressed her mother, and listened to the long story of small daily trials that lay in front, and of the great anxiety always behind them.

She was sure the drains wanted looking at, and Mr. King said he had no money for such things, though she believed the landlord ought to do it if anybody would take the trouble to tell him.

Jane cooked worse than ever, instead of improving. Mr. King sent in expensive materials for dinner, but they were completely wasted in the cooking.

Mary was always dirty and untidy, and grumbled, and she believed her wages were overdue. And so on for a long time; but Cecile knew by experience that all the hoarded woes of the last week or two must have an outlet now, so she talked cheerfully and encouragingly, and drew it all out.

Then Mrs. King told her of Lord Armstead's visit, as if it was another injury.

"He expected to see you," she said; "and said he had seen you at the opera with Lady Churchill. Of course, I could not tell him how you happened to know the Churchills."

"Why not, mother?" asked Cecile, holding her small head proudly erect, a proud rush of colour to her cheek, a proud flash in her eye.

"Why not, Cecile! Would you really expect me to tell a man in Lord Armstead's position how you had lowered yourself! Why, in the eyes of people like that you might as well be a housemaid or a shop-girl."

This old string had been harped upon so often to no avail, and only brought fresh notes of pain to vibrate in poor Cecile's heart. She turned the conversation by asking if there was any news from Ashthorpe.

"Yes. By-the-bye, I had a letter from Mrs. Leigh yesterday. They are uneasy about that nephew who used to stay with them sometimes—don't you remember? He was a sailor. There is bad news, or no news, or something about his ship, the *Ossiris*—or something like it. I cannot imagine why she took the trouble to write and tell me. Perhaps she thought I might be interested, as he used to play with you when you were children. And one of the curates is going to be married; and Ashthorpe is still standing empty. But the letter is lying somewhere."

Cecile rose quickly to seek it, with a sharp pain at her heart. She quite understood why the letter had been written. With her natural instinct of womanly sympathy Mrs. Leigh knew that Cecile would wish to share their anxiety, and yet she had no sufficient grounds to warrant writing the letter to her directly. She was no letter-writer; and had only twice sent a few hurried, scrawling lines to Mrs. King, chiefly parish news, with an inquiry after herself and husband, and daughter, crowded in at the end, like an after-thought.

This letter was wretchedly scant of detail. "We are anxious for news of the *Ossiris*—Norman Leigh's ship—it is long overdue at

Trinidad; and some uncomfortable reports have reached the Admiralty—nothing official; but of a ship I fear that no news is had news. We had a letter from him a month ago, or more—time flies so, one loses count.

"He inquired after you and Cecile, and said that he was going to shoot *colibri* instead of grouse, and have them stuffed to trim a dress for Cecile."

Cecile went home, her mind so full of Norman that she hardly thought of her mother's complaints, and of her usual grinding worries. Could it really be possible that anyone so full of life and health, and hope as Norman, should have passed away from the wide, beautiful world which he had so loved and enjoyed—that his place should know him no more!

She could not realise that one so young, so intensely alive in every nerve and fibre, should be lying cold and still under the deep green sea. One thing after another had been taken from her. And now that the hidden, but deep-seated hope was all but shut out of her future, she found how dear a hope it had been. Her sky had indeed closed in all round—no more sunshine, nothing but dull heavy clouds before and behind, all her atmosphere heavily charged with tears.

How tiresome Mrs Leigh was to say so little! Norman one day had been thinking of Cecile, out on the blue southern sea, or on some bowery tropical island, and there was nothing in the letter by which she could fix the date. She wanted to search back in her memory to find what she had been doing at the moment when his thought might have met hers; but it might have been any day, or month, or hour of the day.

She surprised Lady Churchill by taking every opportunity of hunting through the *Times*, but there was no mention yet of the *Oceira*. She could not write to Mrs Leigh to ask if they had had further news.

She went to see her mother very soon, but of course she had not had another Ashthorpe letter. Cecile knew that it was all but impossible, and yet she was cross and impatient, and left her mother sooner than usual, in the middle of her almost endless narration of her daily annoyances.

The summer advanced, and the last July days came, when the children really could not be persuaded to attend to their lessons; and Lady Churchill consulted with her husband and daughters upon the important topic of where to go.

Economy must be considered, as they were such a large family. She hoped Miss King would not want to go home, it would be so inconvenient having all the children in sea-side lodgings without the usual staff of superintendence.

One sleepy afternoon, when Cecile was trying to forget her aching head and giving her mind to a geography lesson—when the windows were opened in the fruitless attempt to persuade some of the heavy, smoky air to come into the close schoolroom, so much over-populated in proportion to each person's due of cubic feet of atmosphere—when all that ought to be expected of human nature was to lie on a shingly beach under the shadow of a chalk-cliff, and listen lazily to the plash of the waves—a card was brought to Cecile by the schoolroom-maid, who was brimming with astonished curiosity, and spoke with more than her usual respect.

"The Earl of Armstead!" read Cecile, on the small oblong piece of paste-board. Then said aloud, "This will do for to-day, Muriel! Go and practice. And Evelyn, you must have your verb ready by the time I come back!"

She was too tired and listless to feel any curiosity or even interest in Lord Armstead's visit, but was glad of an excuse to leave the lessons.

The drawing-room looked so pleasant and cool when she went in. All the blinds were down, shutting out the heat and glare; and the great stands of flowers and ferns stood fresh and sweet in the shade. The dark, harmonious tints of the walls and hangings were so grateful to her tired eyes after the bare, shabby school-room.

Lady Churchill and her daughters were at a

matinée musicale. There was nobody in the room but Lord Armstead. He came quickly forward to meet her as she entered, pale and quiet, in her simple cambric dress, that clung to her in soft folds, trailing behind her.

It was not the bright, merry girl whom he had learnt to love; but a new, not less lovable Cecile, all soft motion and tender harmony of pale colour—a large-eyed, spirit-like maiden, in the dim, half-light, coming towards him.

But his artistic eye was conscious of supreme satisfaction, though he felt so much the more tenderly towards her, seeing how she had lost her old self.

He took her hand silently, and held it in his, looking into her sweet, upturned eyes. A faint surprise came into them, then a look of fear, and she gently tried to draw her hand away.

He held it firmly in his. He was too eager to say what he had come to say to make any preamble, or even to open conversation by talking of indifferent subjects.

She cast her eyes down, reading the story told so plainly in his; she flushed and trembled, and would have broken away from him had she been able.

"Cecile!" he said, in his deep, low, musical voice, quite strong and steady, though his pulses were all throbbing at fever rate. "I have come to ask you if you love me—or if you can promise to love me! I cannot do without you any longer! I have waited very patiently—have I not! And I will still wait if you tell me that, though you do not love me yet, you will do so if I give you a little more time. But I think you love me a little now! And I promise to be content with that, if you will give me your old, sweet self; for I know I can make you love me more when you are all my own. I cannot possibly tell you in words how dearly I love you—and have loved you all this time! How I have longed for the right to protect you, and to help those who are near and dear to you!"

She did not speak, but lifted her eyes again, now all wet with unshed tears.

He read a good augury in their humid gray depths, and went on—

"Sweetest, I would not bribe your love. I would say nothing of anything that I can give you, excepting my love, if I thought you had none for me. But I know you have a little—perhaps more than you know of; but I am so much older than you that it is difficult for you to look upon me as your lover—your husband. I think, I know I can make you happy, my own dear little love; though I am so unworthy of your fresh innocent young heart. And you are my first love, Cecile, though I am forty-seven years old. It seems ridiculous, incredible, but it is true. I never cared enough for a woman in my life to ask her to marry me until I saw you, one cold March morning, riding along the lane with a red wing in your hat."

"Ah! Poor Hero," sighed Cecile. "I wonder who rides Hero now?"

"You shall have Hero back again, if she is in Kamschatka!" said Lord Armstead. "You shall be like a princess with a magic ring, and not have one wish ungratified. I will buy Ashthorpe, or any other place, and settle it on your mother for her life. Think of her, Cecile. Don't take me because of her; don't let any outside consideration sway you. But you know how glad she would be, and what a difference it would make in her life."

"My child, I cannot leave you to toil on here, and waste your youth and health. I must have you at once, to care for, and to make up to you for the sad year you have come through."

"I don't know!" she said, at last. "I cannot see. I do like you very much, but I am not sure whether—I cannot bear to pain you."

"You must not think of that. It would be a sharp pain, but nothing like the life-long pain of finding you had married me, and could not love me after all. But you do love me, Cecile! You are tired and taken by surprise, and the little shoot is choked up by the cares of this world, like the seed that fell amongst the thorns. Clear them away, and there will be fruit to come a thousandfold."

Suddenly a suspicion, hitherto unthought of crossed him.

"I will not give you up now, Cecile," he said, "unless you have given away your best love already. If that should be the case, in pity tell me so. Are you free, bound by no promise—by no sense of honour, to another man?"

"I am free," she answered; "but I am so tired, and I cannot think. Will you give me until to-morrow to think about it! I will write and tell you."

A pang of disappointment smote him, but he concealed it, and answered, calmly and gently,—

"So be it, then. I would rather you had trusted yourself to me at once, without consideration; but when a man is as hungry as I am he will take half a loaf gladly, lest he have to go without bread at all."

"I am so sorry," she said, with soft, pleading eyes. "I think I am stupid with the heat, and my head is full of latitude and longitude, and won't take in anything else. I care for you too much to refuse you, and I am not sure whether I care enough to marry you. I wish you had not said this! I wish we could always be friends—for I want a friend very much, and feel so glad and safe when I am with you. Only let me consider until to-morrow."

"Ah, Cecile, real love does not want to consider! Only promise me, darling, that the one subject of consideration shall be—whether you can learn to love me truly or not."

"Why, of course it is only that," she said; and he read perfect truth in her clear eyes.

He was not afraid that she might marry him for the sake of his rank; but he was just a little doubtful that she might consent for her mother's sake, and he did so crave to be loved for the sake of his love and himself only.

Then he said good-bye, and a sudden impulse prompted him to stoop and kiss her brow.

She did not shrink, only faintly blushed, and he felt a chill of disappointment that she took it in such a quiet way.

"I am going to look at my Irish property," he said. "If I have a good letter to-morrow I shall put it off for a week or two; but it is necessary that I should go as soon as possible. If I have a bad letter I shall go at once."

He smiled as he said it, turning on his way to the door, as he had forgotten all about it until this last minute.

She was standing just where he had left her, in the midst of a long dusty sunbeam that was stealing through a chink in the blind.

She looked such a sad, lonely little creature that he could not help coming back to kiss her again in his grave, fatherly way. There was no learned seer beside them to tell him that it was unlucky to say good-bye twice.

He got into the line of the sunbeam. It glanced upon a rare vase of Venetian glass on the mantelpiece, broke into a dozen prismatic colours, and was reflected upon Lord Armstead, resting like a blood-red stain upon his brow. Cecile barely saw it then, but recalled it vividly afterwards.

Then he left her, and she heard the door close behind him.

His last speech had unintentionally done more towards winning her love than all his other words, for she knew that he was going to Ireland because she had told him that it was his duty, and the knowledge came to her with a sudden, wonderful thrill—it was her first taste of power.

He had been at Lady Churchill's "at home" three nights ago—the only time he had responded to her invitation—and talking to Cecile for a few minutes in the crowded music-room, the conversation had accidentally turned upon Irish hunting, and he admitted that though he had a large estate in Connaught, inherited with his second title of Viscount Connemara, he had never been in Ireland in his life.

"It is a black, barren country," he said. "I do not draw income enough from it to pay the expenses—the agent's salary and so forth. There are very few inducements held out to an Irish landlord to visit his property."

"I think you ought to go and see it," said Cecile. "They have been talking a great deal

here at lunch about Ireland. Sir Francis has friends on both sides, and it is very interesting to hear them when they come; for Lady Churchill is Irish, and feels very strongly on the subject."

"And do you feel strongly, too?" he asked, with an amused smile.

"I don't know enough about it," she said, simply. "But it seems to me that if the landlords lived more in Ireland, and saw things for themselves instead of trusting to paid agents, they might make things better for the poor people. One really hears such very sad stories, you know."

No more was said at the time; so Cecile was very much surprised to find that her words had been pondered over and acted upon. It was so strange to think that her opinion should sway this grave, clever, elderly man, when it was so difficult to make the children obey her, and to persuade her mother to see matters in her own light! Then all at once she remembered her duties, and flew to the schoolroom to resume them.

She had left comparative order and found chaos. Here—at any rate, for the present—her will was not supreme. A reign of misrule had begun; and Cecile contemplated the inkly table-covers and pinboards, the books thrown about the floor, the dog tearing and tossing the loose music-sheets, the riotous children, in hapless dismay.

Then Lady Churchill came in, hearing the noise as she returned from the concert, and was vexed and put out.

She would not scold Cecile before the children, but the reproach was implied in her glances and the tone of her voice.

Cecile had hoped that Lady Churchill would not hear of the visitor she had had; but Evelyn, giving as an excuse for their naughtiness, that Miss King had been so long in the drawing-rooms, and they did not know what they had to do, she was obliged to answer the questioning look.

"Lord Armistead called!" she said, confusedly; "he is going to Ireland."

"Indeed! I am sorry we were out!" said Lady Churchill, coldly. "I suppose he left some message for me?" She did not say: "As he did such a very unprecedented thing as to ask for my governess, finding us all out; but she thought it and looked it."

"No," he merely said he was going to Ireland," said Cecile, anxious to conciliate, and conscious that she was all but telling a fib in her wistfulness to give some appearance of a message to her ladyship to his parting words.

Lady Churchill had always been very careful to avoid wounding Cecile by assuming the tone of a mistress, but to-day she was hot and tired and put out.

It was nearly the end of the London season, and, in spite of all the trouble and expense to which they had been put, an impossible-to-be-accepted offer to Flora from a penniless government clerk had been the only result of the campaign.

And here was an earl, a peer of the realm, running after her governess, when he might have run after pretty Fanny or highly-cultured Flora! She must get rid of a governess of this dangerous kind as soon as she could find a plausible excuse.

Cecile had her evening all to herself to her great satisfaction, and she tried to weigh all the pros and cons calmly and honestly.

She was very resolute in trying to thrust out of sight the anxieties and humiliations of her life, but she could not help smiling once or twice to think how surprised Lady Churchill would be to find out that it was a future countess whom she was tacitly rebuking and snubbing. It was hard, too, to put away all thought of her mother. She had promised to think of love, and love only, and she would be true to Lord Armistead's trust.

She would not have lights brought; she could think so much better in the slowly gathering twilight, looking out over the dim, empty park. She was like Margaret with the daisy, only it was "Ich liebe ihn—ich liebe ihn nicht."

She did like him so much, and was so grateful for his love; and thought, now and then, that she would so gladly give up her life to make him

happy. But was it love? or had she given her real love to Norman Leigh?

It seemed such ages since she had said goodbye to Norman—a year ago—on Lanthorpe sands; but she remembered him, oh! so well—his bright, loving eyes, with their infinite trust. She knew he had always loved her, and meant to tell her so when he came back. She had said truthfully that she was free; but was she not really as much bound by Norman's trust in her as she would have been by spoken promise?

"And now, perhaps, he was drowned!" she said that to herself over and over, but she did not believe it one bit; she was sure he would come home and claim her soon. And how should she feel if she were married to Lord Armistead and met Norman suddenly alone or "in a crowd," like the girl in the song!

In one clear flash of her vivid imagination she saw it all. She knew that the love that she might grow to feel for Lord Armistead was something very different from the love that would spring forth at the sight of Norman Leigh—at the sound of his voice.

She had had so little time for thinking of Norman that he had become shadowy and vague. Lord Armistead naturally was a very substantial figure in the foreground. But to-night she forgot all about Lord Armistead, as soon as she made up her mind that she had not the love to give that he wanted, and sat on, hour after hour, dreaming happily about Norman Leigh.

She never doubted his love and constancy, though it might have seemed as if she were throwing away substance for shadow; such substance, too, and such shadow!

An earl who loved her with all his heart, and was waiting eagerly for her decision, to carry her away from poverty and care and humiliation; a sailor, almost penniless, who loved her once in a boyish way, and who might have forgotten her and had a dozen loves since—who might even now be lying in a watery grave.

Then a clock striking eleven broke upon her happy dreaming. She started, remembering that her letter must be written.

It was quite dark; she sought a light, then got out her desk, selected a pretty sheet of note-paper with a blue and silver monogram—a relic of her old stock of stationery—and wrote the letter, carefully and steadily folded and closed it, and put it aside to be posted in the morning.

Lord Armistead passed a restless night, and got up early to be in time for the first post, like a school-girl expecting a valentine.

The post brought nothing but business letters. He told himself that the letter could not possibly have come yet; so he breakfasted, and then went to the "Travellers" to pass away the time.

"Going to Ireland!" exclaimed a friend, in dismay. "This is certainly the most rash of all your exploits. Here is a man endowed with every good thing that fortune can shower on her favourites, and who has spent his life in trying to get rid of it! You think you have a charmed life, Armistead. You have come safe from Indian jungles, and African deserts, and Greek brigand-haunts, and you will not rest until you have run the most dangerous risk of all—to beard the Irish tenant in his den! Take a friend's advice: provide yourself with a bullet-proof suit of chain-armor, and make your will!"

The last part of the advice struck Lord Armistead as a very good idea. He returned to his hotel, found that no letters were awaiting him; then he went to his lawyer, whom he instructed concerning his will.

"Bring it to me to-night," he said. "It is possible that I may be off in the morning, and I want it all complete and off my mind."

Half-an-hour after he got Cecile's letter.

It was a great blow, for he had grown so hopeful, almost to certainty. He went out again, and walked rapidly through the streets, forgetting all about his appointment in his fierce anguish.

But the air and movement brought with them—not resignation, but hopefulness. He would not give up.

Then he went to his rooms and found the lawyer waiting.

Should he sign the will as it was drawn up?

Had not circumstances changed since the morning. No, he would not believe it; and if they could have changed it was all the same.

He signed the will.

CHAPTER VI.

In another fortnight the windows of Sir Francis Churchill's house in London were all closed and shuttered. A charwoman was left in charge, and the family were scattered to the four winds.

Sir Francis and his wife, with Flora and Muriel, went on a visit to old Lady Churchill in her Somersetshire dower-house, their own country house being let on a long lease.

Fanny had gone with a party to the Engadine. The younger ones, in charge of the nurses, and nominally under Bertha's suzerainty, were all sent to a cheap sea-side lodging.

Cecile insisted on going home to her mother, who was ill, though Lady Churchill was annoyed. She was very kind to Cecile; but she was one of those people who grudge showing any kindness that may cause the least inconvenience to themselves.

Cecile carried her point, and went off with her quarter's salary in her pocket—three crisp five-pound notes, two sovereigns, and some odd silver.

"You and I are going away, mother, to spend all this money," she said, with her bright, sunny smile and fresh, cheery voice.

"Ah! Cecile, child, you must not spend your money on me. And how can I go away for pleasure when there are so many things not paid for, and papa looks so sad and worried? How can I leave him?"

"I would not spend the money on going away if it were not quite necessary, mother. It will not cost nearly all this money; and it will be much cheaper than the long doctor's bill that will be the consequence if you do not have rest and change at once!"

They went to a dull, vulgar, little sea-side town on the English Channel; but the sea breezes were as pure and life-giving as they were at Brighton and Scarborough, and brought the colour back to Mrs. King's cheeks, and the light to her eyes.

Cecile, too, threw off her cares—found hourly enjoyment in looking at the sea, always changing and always the same—hourly amusement in watching the nurses and children on the beach, and the manners and customs of the grown-up visitors.

It was a bright, hot day in the middle of August, with a haze lying on the sea, and Cecile, having bathed, walked along the shore to dry her hair.

She had a novel, and, finding a comfortable bank of sand, she sat down to enjoy it.

Mrs. King never came out in the morning. The catering for the day's provisions, the baths, the walk, and the novel were Cecile's invariable morning routine.

So far the rare variations in the weather had been the only break in the monotony, so she settled down to her book, and was soon buried in the story—a thrilling complication of mystery and marvel by Wilkie Collins—certain of an uninterrupted hour to finish it before dinner.

The waves broke upon the rocks close to her; the children's voices came along the beach, softened by distance; some boatmen on the rocks were seeking for bait, and talking across the pools, but she heard nothing. Then a voice, close behind her, said,—

"Cecile!" and she heard that, and started, her heart giving a great bound, but all power of motion gone from the rest of her body. "Don't look round, Cecile, guess who it is!" A pair of hands covered her eyes. "Once—twice—thrice! Do you give it up? Then you must look. Oh! Cecile, my own, my love, my darling! when shall I have looked enough at you?"

"Norman!" she said, looking up at the blue eyes, so tender and so true, and the face—now browner by many shades—and the familiar dark curls.

"And to think of all you have gone through, and I never knew. I, who would have laid down

my life to save you from one hour of pain! But it is all over now, Cecile; you have me to take care of you, you know. You can trust me for that, can't you?"

He sat beside her on the sand. They had it all to themselves, for it was the universal dinner-hour at Dulcombe-by-the-Sea, and all the nurses and children and mothers and bathers had gone home.

They had so much to talk about; and, strange to say, the only question that Norman did not think of asking was one that might have been of paramount importance to a lover just returned from a long voyage, who had never been told, before or since, whether his affection was returned; or, assuming that it had been returned before his departure, whether his lady-love had been constant during his absence? They understood and trusted each other too well.

"Then you were not drowned?" asked Cecile, all at once remembering the anxiety of two months ago. "And how do you happen to have come so soon?"

"That is all the same story, Cecile," he said, gravely; "it was a near thing with me. I will tell you all the whole long story another day. We were run down off Antigua by an American ship, and the poor old *Osiris* went to the bottom—they hope to fish her up in time. We lost none of the crew, thank Heaven! I came home in a merchantman, and am waiting for another ship; meantime I am going to be married."

"But Norman, how can I! There is Lady Churchill—and if you go away again we might as well not be married at all!"

"You are most certainly not going back to my Lady Churchill's," said Norman. "Of course it is hard that I must leave you; but, you see, I cannot give up my profession. But then I can take you from all your drudgery, and you will know that you have somebody to stand up for you and care for you. I forgot to tell you that my godfather died and left me three thousand pounds; that, with my pay, and the little I had before, will keep you pretty comfortably, Cecile; not as I should wish to keep you, my darling, but it will be better than what has been going on all this time. And good times will come. I may get prize-money and promotion. Are you happy, Cecile? are you content?"

There was a long silence as they sat hand-in-hand by the sea. Cecile thought she must die of so much happiness.

"Don't you wonder how I found you out?" he said. "It was really like a detective's work. I went to Ashthorpe, heard all about everything, my poor sweet one, from Aunt Mary, and got your London address; went to Beaconsfield-street, saw your father, declared my intentions—as people say—in the most honourable manner; followed you here, and now me *voilà*, sitting beside you only a day and a-half after landing. I have such a collection of curiosities for you, though I lost half in the *Osiris*. You will find many advantages in marrying a sailor—though perhaps they scarcely counterbalance the disadvantages. And look here!"

He pulled out of his pocket, a stiff, shapeless thing, something like a dried fungus. Then Cecile recognised the glove she gave him on Ashthorpe rocks.

She smiled, then looked sad, saying,—

"Poor little Dash!"

"Ah! there is so much that we cannot replace, I know. But you will have new pets and grow fond of them. I have brought you a monkey for a beginning; you always used to say that you wanted me to bring you one."

"Oh, how charming! I hope I shan't be afraid of it. But what will mother say! Norman, how selfish I am! I quite forgot all about her. She will think I am drowned."

"She knows all about it. I went to the house first, your little goose, or how should I have found you! But we might go to her now. Dear, don't you wish this morning would last for ever!"

It seemed to last for a week, at any rate, for day followed day in an unbroken chain of happiness; sunny mornings on the beach, lazy afternoons in the verandah; an early tea, because of the shortening days; then a long stroll through

the "happy autumn fields," where the yellow sheaves were standing; along the lanes in the soft shadow of the hedges; then the long lines of down and the golden plain of the sea, where

"Many an evening by the waters did we watch the shadowy ships,
And our spirits rushed together at the touching of the lips."

Mrs. King was happy in her daughter's happiness; if she sometimes thought regretfully of what might have been, she kept her regrets locked within her bosom.

"Not the match she might have made!"

But then it was so much better than governing; and it was very nice to think that she would not lose the daughter whom she had missed so all this time.

They would go to a nicer house; and now that things seemed to be on the mend, no doubt they would go on improving.

Then some terrible news came, that cast a shadow over Cecile's happiness; shocked Norman, and filled Mrs. King with horror.

She was sitting alone in the little drawing-room, Cecile having gone to bathe, when Norman came in with last night's London paper.

"You have not seen the paper, have you?"

"Such a shocking thing has happened. You know Lord Armistead, of course?"

"Yes, very well indeed. What has happened?"

"Shot from behind a hedge by those skulking Irish rascals; killed on the spot! Here it is—would you like to read it?"

She took the paper, but the type swam before her eyes. It was only another repetition of the terrible story so often told.

Lord Armistead had found his tenantry in rebellion, his house occupied by the agent in a state of siege. No rents had been paid for three years, though many of the tenants were perfectly able to pay. One man had resisted popular opinion, paid his rent, and been murdered.

Reductions had been made; there was no exorbitant demands; but Lord Armistead was an earl, a landlord, and an absentee, therefore fair game. Rents had been asked for, and evictions made, in his name; so his life was declared forfeit, and one more "Agrarian murder" was added to the list.

"Keep it from Cecile," said Mrs. King; "or tell her very cautiously. They were great friends, and she will be very much distressed."

So Norman told her when he met her on the beach; and after her first dumb paralysis of horror, she cried as if all the fountains of her tears were broken up for the man who had loved her with such a tender, patient, chivalrous love, and who had gone to his death at her instigation.

It was not in human nature to feel no jealousy of such a burst of sorrow.

As her tears subsided she began to notice that Norman was very quiet, and looked grave and anxious.

She thought it unkind, not to her, but to Lord Armistead, that he should not grieve too; and she said,—

"Oh, Norman, he was so good, so kind. I have not told you yet how good he was to me when I had nobody else. I thought he would not like me to tell; but now he is dead, and it cannot matter. And I hurt him; I disappointed him; I was cruel and ungrateful, and sent him away. I made him go to Ireland; and he went, and they have killed him—and it is all my fault!"

"I suppose you mean that he asked you to marry him?"

Cecile was chilled and frightened by the cold, suppressed voice.

"Dear, it was not my fault," she said, pleading for herself now, though she had just been accusing herself. "I was so surprised. He was so old. I had no idea. I had not known him very long. It was before we left Ashthorpe, and then again just before he went to Ireland."

"And why didn't you take him?" asked Norman, still in his hard voice.

"Why, how could I!" she asked, simply. "I liked you best!"

"And you refused an earl twice over for me! and I was far away, and might— No, no!" he cried, holding her to him passionately. "You knew better than that. You knew you could trust me!"

Cecile's tears were dried for the time; but she could not lightly forget that tragic story in which she had so close a share. And she told Norman everything that had taken place between her and Lord Armistead, and his little cloud of jealousy vanished into the azure depths of his trust and love; and he, too, loved the memory of the man who had been so noble and so true, and did not grudge him Cecile's tears and tender gratitude.

Then Mr. King complained of his loneliness and discomfort; and they went back to Beaconsfield-street, and Cecile wondered how she could have thought it such a dreary, ugly place!

Norman hovered between her and the Admiralty Office, and at last came with the news that he was appointed to the *Sapphire*, and they must be married at once, or there would be no time for a honeymoon trip.

Cecile had written to Lady Churchill, and received a kind, congratulatory letter, accompanied by a pair of peacock-feather screens. She, too, was greatly shocked at Lord Armistead's death.

She was more relieved than sorry to lose Cecile. It was very awkward, after all, having a pretty girl like that in the house to rival her daughters, and who could not be buried out of sight, but must be treated upon an equality. So she engaged a grim, elderly dragon of a governess, armed to the teeth with certificates and accomplishments, who kept strict discipline in the schoolroom, and certainly never dreamed of attracting the attention of eligible noblemen.

Then came a last surprise—a crowning surprise—that took away for ever the few shadows remaining on Cecile's horizon, and, if possible, made her love more tenderly than ever the memory of her murdered lover.

She had read all the details of Lord Armistead's stately funeral in the county paper sent to her by Mrs. Leigh, and she knew that Captain Aylmer, his cousin, had succeeded to the title and estates.

The new countess was very delicate, and obliged to live abroad or in the south of England. It was so sad to think that Armistead Castle must be closed again; that the artistic eye that had so skillfully called it into living beauty and splendour was closed in death; and that after his wild, roaming life, the lord of the mansion should not find a rest in the home of his race, excepting in the dark, narrow vault of the church.

"And it might all have been yours, Cecile!" Mrs. King would sigh.

"Dear mother! think of the pain I have been spared. Would you have me a poor, lonely widow at eighteen?"

"You would not have been a widow; for if he had married you he would not have gone off to Ireland in that reckless way. You would have saved his life!"

"No! It was his duty to go; and I would not have held him back. I should have gone with him—and perhaps been shot too!"

Cecile was sitting alone, busy with her bridal preparations, when a visitor arrived, and was announced as "Lord Armistead."

The name was such a shock that she could not rise to receive the slight, brown-eyed young man who came into the room.

He saw her pallor and startled expression, and guessed the cause—distressed at his stupidity in not having provided against alarming her, by introducing himself as Captain Aylmer.

He apologised so gently and kindly, that she felt friendly and at home with him at once.

"I was anxious to make your acquaintance," he said. "First, because I understood that you were such a very dear friend to poor Armistead; and secondly, because we shall probably be thrown together in the way of business."

Then, seeing her puzzled face, he said,—
"Are you not aware of the circumstances—have you not been informed yet? Then you will

hear from our lawyers by the next post. There must have been some unexpected delay. I am truly glad to be the bearer of good news. My cousin has left you the whole of his property—as much as did not go with the entail—deducting a few legacies to old servants, and so on. When it is realised you will find that you have an income of nearly three thousand a year!"

So poverty and privation and anxiety for the future were all of the past—the winter of discontent made glorious by the summer sun of a deathless love.

Then Norman and Cecile were quietly married in a bright little church, recently built to meet the wants of the new and growing district.

It was all decorated for a harvest-thanking, and with fairy-like arches of drooping golden oats and feathery barley, wreathed with richly-hued autumn flowers—dahlias, gladioli, and star-like asters.

Over altar and arch, along the walls and round the organ, the psalm of thanksgiving ran—in flowers and corn—"We thank Thee, we praise Thee"—"Rejoice"—"Give Thanks."

And down in two happy, loving hearts the sweet hymn echoed, to make music in their lives until they join in the last triumphant hymn of creation.

"I should so like to see Ashthorpe again," said Cecile one day, as they walked beside Ulleswater. "Do you think there will be time, dear, before you go?"

"Plenty—we need not stay more than two days. They will be delighted to have us at the Rectory. I have been wishing for it all this time; but I thought it might pain you to go, so I said nothing about it."

So, on a golden October afternoon, Norman and Cecile were sitting once more on the rocks where we first saw them fifteen months ago. These months have been longer than fifteen years of the life they lived before, and have left their impress on both.

Norman is browner, broader, and more manly; but his boyish mirthfulness and frank manner are unchanged.

Cecile is very nearly her old self again—bright, and full of life and spirits; but time has been less kind to her than to her young husband.

She is not the careless, merry child she used to be, though it is difficult to realise that she is a matron of a fortnight's standing, as she laughs and sends the Rector's big dog into the sea, just as she sent Little Dash.

"Is it not like the picnic day, Norman? And here you are, going off again and leaving me behind. Do you remember it all?"

She was asking the question for the fifteenth time that afternoon—it was such a pleasure to be answered.

"You did not kiss me that day," she said. "Did you ever think about me after you left us? Do you remember when I said I would read it all up? I never once opened a book about the West Indies."

"I used to go over it all when I was keeping watch. I often laughed when there was no one to see but the man in the moon, to think how you imagined Peru was in the West Indies. Did you teach your pupils that? Little wretches! I hate to think of them, and all the worry you had!"

"They were very nice—I often think of Evelyn and Muriel. I shall be so glad to see them again! I was such a silly, frivolous girl before I knew them, Norman; I liked nothing but being petted and having my own way! But they were happy days, though they must have been very empty and unsatisfactory, really. Not so happy as the days to come, though! Oh, Norman, why can't we stay here for ever!—why must you go?"

He kissed her very tenderly.

"Sweetheart, you know you would not have me to stay; and it is a very different going away from the last."

"Yes, yes; you know how happy I am going to be. Has not everything turned out wonderfully and beautifully? I never really cared for Ashthorpe, and when we saw it to-day I wondered how I could have called such a formal,

dreary place home. I like our new home far better. How pleased poor mamma looked when we took her to see it; and now she is comfortably installed, and ready to receive us. Norwood is so convenient for papa, too; and the garden can be made most lovely by the spring."

"I am glad we may call it Ashthorpe, for it makes it feel like an old friend. The drawing-room will be so pretty with all dear Lord Armstead's curiosities and artistic odds-and-ends. And your portrait will soon be finished and hanging up in my room, and what red-letter days mail-days will be!"

"And you don't regret Armstead, dearest? No, I know you don't; but I like to see the look in your eyes when I ask you. How sad and lonely it looked to-day! I wish the new lord would come to live there."

"See, here is C. A. K. that you cut on the rock; it has lasted longer than C. A. K. has done. You must cut C. A. L. to-day, and N. L., and a true lover's knot. There will just be time before the tide is up!"

"By-the-bye, Cecile," said Norman, as he dug his knife into the rock. "I have found out Hero. Mr. Hay bought her, and is ready to let you have her back at once. He was more than kind about it. I met him this morning, and told him that you were anxious to buy her if you could."

"Oh, Norman! how charming to think that I shall ride her again! It is like a fairy-story; I get everything I wish for. I shall begin to wish at once for an admiral's hat and epaulettes for you, and a very large retiring pension."

"And what for yourself?"

"That is for myself; for it means that you are to come home and be with me always. It is horrid to marry a sailor—I always felt sorry for girls who married sailors. How I used to cry when I sang 'Auld Robin Gray' the first time you went away!"

"But Jeanie did not marry the sailor—she only wished she had done so, poor girl! I am glad you had less confidence in casualty rumours."

"It was very like our story," said Cecile, thoughtfully. "I always felt sorry for Jeanie; but so angry with her for not waiting a little longer. I am so glad—so glad, love, that our story has ended in the right way!"

[THE END]

HEART, MY HEART!

—101—

HEART, my heart! so fond to linger,
Come away!

Once with beckoning finger,
Sweetly once she bade thee stay;
Once what heavenly bliss was thine,
All her love, and poured like wine!
Come, oh, come! make no delay!

Here are those bright looks she gave thee,

Here alone!

What can lingering save thee?
This sweet touch or that soft tone?
Love no tearful claim can make:
Here to give and here to take:
Yes, the kisses all her own.

Oh, the wealth that back she closes!

Lips divine!

Cheeks, my only roses;
Eyes that Hesperus outshine!
All her sweetness takes she home!
Back into my bosom come,
Heart, my heart! for thou art mine.

But, alas! I do remember:

Here thou art!

Given, some fond December,
Never from her breast to part,
Bitter, bitter is thy lot,
To be here that loves thee not,
Mine no longer, breaking heart.

HINTS FOR HEALTH SEEKERS.

Don't shake a hornet's nest to see if any of the family are at home.

Don't try to take the right of way from an express train at a railway crossing.

Don't blow in the gun your grandfather carried in the war of 1857. It is more dangerous now than it was then.

Don't hold a wasp by the other end while you throw it out in front of the fire to see if it is alive. It is generally alive.

Don't try to persuade a bull-dog to give up a yard of which it is in possession. Possession to a bull-dog is ten points of the law.

Don't call a very large, strong, sneaky man a provocator. If you are sure he is a provocator hire another man to break the news to him.

COMPARISON more than reality makes men happy, and can make them wretched.

KINDNESS is the only charm permitted to the aged; it is the coquetry of grey hair.

BETTER three hours too soon than one minute too late.

THE beggar is the only man in the universe who is not obliged to study appearances.

THE man who lives in vain lives worse than in vain. He who lives to no purpose lives to a bad purpose.

EXCESSIVE devotion to business may be best treated, not by attacking the excess, but by opening up the many claims of family and society, of health and general intelligence, of private well-being and public duty, that are inevitably left unfulfilled. If the absorbed man can but be led to appreciate the importance of these claims, and to realise his own relation to them, he will of himself cease to be absorbed.

THE FIRST MEERSCHAUM PIPE.—In 1723 there lived in Pesh, the capital of Hungary, Karol Kowates, a shoemaker, whose ingenuity in cutting and carving on wood, etc., brought him into contact with Count Andrassy, with whom he became a favourite. The count, on his return from a mission to Turkey, brought with him a piece of whitish clay, which had been presented to him as a curiosity on account of its extraordinary light specific gravity. It struck the shoemaker that, being porous, it must be well adapted for pipes, as it would absorb the nicotine. The experiment was tried, and Karol cut a pipe for the count and one for himself. But in the pursuit of his trade he could not keep his hands clean, and many a piece of shoemaker's wax became attached to the pipe. The clay, however, instead of assuming a dirty appearance when Karol wiped it off, received wherever the wax adhered to it, a clearer brown polish, instead of the dull white it previously had. Attributing this change in the tint to its proper source, he waxed the whole surface, and polishing the pipe again, smoked it, and noticed how admirably and beautifully it coloured, also how much more sweetly the pipe smoked after being waxed. Other noblemen hearing of the wonderful properties of this singular species of clay, imported it in considerable quantities for the manufacture of pipes. The natural scarcity of this much-esteemed article, and the great cost of importation in those days of limited facilities for transportation, rendered its use exclusively confined to the richest European noblemen until 1830, when it became a more general article of trade. The first meerschaum pipe made by Karol Kowates has been preserved in the museum of Pesh.

FOR ordinary dryness of the skin, such as affects most people at different periods of the year, BERTHAM'S GLYCERINE AND CUCUMBER will be found very softening. It is sold in bottles at 1s. 3d. by post from Mr. Bertham, Chemist, Cheltenham, who also supplies an excellent tooth paste and a delicate rose-leaf powder. Our readers should send for price list.

JESSICA.

—101—

"It was very foolish of Mr. Peppers to think he could keep Jessica from falling in love, and other people from falling in love with Jessica—she was altogether too pretty for that. Just seventeen, with a round, rosebud face, a wealth of dark brown hair, and the sweetest temper in the world. It was a sight to see her upon her weather-beaten choleric old father's arm on the way to church.

He looked like a thunder-cloud which had captured a sunbeam; or, as the young men irreverently said—a pompous old turkey cock escorting a dove.

He glared about to the right and left, snorting defiance at admirers, so that the sunbeam glowed and the dove fluttered under very difficult circumstances. But there she was, in spite of the peculiar paternal oppression, the brightest, sweetest creature you can imagine; and with a native bit of coquetry about her, too, that made even the lifting of those curling, dark lashes extremely perilous to the masculine hearts so plentiful about her.

Calford was full of young men. There was a college, and a naval academy, and a piano-forte manufactory there; then Calford was headquarters for artists—the scenery was so beautiful. And it chanced that there were few young ladies in the town.

Peter Peppers was a widower. He had browbeaten his little wife to death when she was very young. She had left him two daughters—Rebecca, who was made of the same harsh material as her father, and Jessica, who was exceedingly like what the mother had been. There was no danger of anyone falling in love with Rebecca—or Becca, as she was called.

Her tart and puckery countenance carried terror to the stoutest masculine heart, and she was left withering on the stem in her thirty-second summer. Her father found in her a spirit equal to his own, but they both agreed in keeping a strict watch upon Jessica. Yet, in spite of continual scolding and fault-finding, Jessica continued to be as happy as a bird. She had youth and hope on her side, and she could hardly fail to go abroad without getting a hint of her power.

Jessica had been allowed the privilege of an intimate friend, a very sweet girl, afflicted with lameness, named Olive Allye; but Olive's two brothers came home from sea, and this intimacy was interdicted by Mr. Peppers.

Jessica went no more to visit her friend.

To do Mr. Peppers justice, he was very fond of Jessica, and proud of her. He knew she was charming and good, and without much forethought determined to keep her to himself.

But fate and Mr. D'Albert were too much for Mr. Peppers' intentions.

Mr. D'Albert was principal of the naval academy. He saw Jessica, and then meeting her again at a church party, asked his landlady for an introduction to her.

Mrs. Japonica hesitated, declaring,—

"Actually, I daren't. Mr. Peppers wouldn't like it."

"But I should," laughed Mr. D'Albert.

"Mr. Peppers never allows gentlemen to pay attention to Jessica. If it were Becca, now, the case would be different."

"It's not Becca. I wouldn't kiss Becca for fifty pounds."

"Mercy! Well, when you get a chance to kiss Jessica let me know."

"I will."

Mr. D'Albert went away and found some more daring soul to introduce him to pretty Jessica.

He stood by her side some ten minutes, saying the usual pleasing nothings of society, admiring the smiling red mouth and dimpled cheeks, and guessing at the length of the curling dark lashes, when Mr. Peppers, discovering the situation, with a portentous putting up of his under lip, hastened upon the scene, and frowning heavily into Mr. D'Albert's handsome face drew Jessica away.

Mr. D'Albert's quiet smile told that he understood the situation, and lookers-on laughed, but no one guessed the end of this beginning.

Mr. D'Albert did not guess it himself until weeks had flown, and he had somehow accumulated a vast deal of information concerning the Peppers.

Then he became acquainted with Olive Allye, and the latter spoke of her friend with enthusiasm.

"If I were a young man," concluded Olive, excitedly, "I'd fall in love with Jessica, and run away with her. She is so bright and pretty, and she never gets taken out for a concert, or a ride, or a sail, as the other girls do. They keep her as close as a nun, and will until she's dried to parchment, like Becca. I don't see how Jessica bears it—I don't!"

Mr. D'Albert had spells of deep thought after this conversation, especially on learning that the only place where Jessica was allowed to walk on a Sunday evening was in the cemetery.

From his window it chanced, too, that he could see the back garden where Jessica sewed and read, and tended her plants and canary, and daily his respect and interest deepened. He had half-a-dozen merry, joyous young sisters at home, and dwelt on the contrast.

Now it happened that Jessica thought as much of Mr. D'Albert as Mr. D'Albert thought of Jessica.

She knew his window in Mrs. Japonica's pretentious boarding-house; knew his horse when he galloped past her father's door; knew—at least knew well enough—where the lovely flowers came from, which sometimes reached her.

Olive Allye had a beautiful garden, and Becca thought Olive sent them, but Jessica knew well enough that the choice and costly selection came from an unexpected quarter.

Mr. D'Albert's glance said as much whenever she chanced to get a bow from him; and if she blushed vividly, who can wonder! She could not think of one objection against Mr. D'Albert as a lover, nor, in reason, could Mr. Peppers. He was every inch a gentleman.

It was very accommodating of Becca to fall ill. She was not painfully ill, only very sorrowful, and unable to drive all before her in the household; so that she was exceedingly cross, and Jessica had a harder time than usual at home.

The doctor ordered a change of scene.

"I'd send you down to the seaside, and Jessica might go with you to take care of you," said Mr. Peppers. "There's too many young men here. I notice that naval fellow lifting his hat to Jessica. But there's always boarders at the sea-side in summer, and a great deal of foolishness going on."

"We could go to Mrs. Green's," said Becca. "Nobody ever goes there."

They could, and did—Mr. Peppers first ascertaining that Mrs. Green had no lodgers, and making her promise that she would take none while his daughters remained with her.

It was a forlorn old place—isolated enough, but comfortable and clean within, and with plenty of sea-air.

Any change was a delight to Jessica, and she climbed the rocks and plashed in the surf, with her cheeks like roses and her eyes bright as jewels.

"Laws!" said Mrs. Green, "see that girl enjoy herself. Ain't she a beauty? It does my heart good to look at her! She'll marry early—you'll see."

"Indeed she won't!" snapped Becca. "We've other intentions."

"Man proposes, but God disposes," replied Mrs. Green, as she rattled her knitting-needles.

Invalidism compelled Miss Becca to be a late riser. Jessica usually had a sea-bath and a run in the morning air before her sister came down.

One morning, as she was tripping across the door-yard, her attention was attracted by a dog-kennel, and a great Russian boar-hound rose up and looked at her inquiringly.

Jessica started, her bright eyes widened, then she looked inquiringly around. But there was no one but the dog and herself in the yard, and as he wagged his tail invitingly and looked

kind, in spite of his deep mouth, she drew near and patted his great head.

Jessica liked animals, especially large dogs and horses. This dog wore a handsome collar, with his name marked upon it—"Pasha;" also his owner's name.

Jessica trembled a little as she read the letters. Her cheeks burned too. Then she heard Mrs. Green's voice through the open window.

"Yes, Miss Peppers, I've taken a dog to board. No harm in that, I hope. Your pa couldn't have any sort of objection to him. I didn't take his master."

"No!" snapped Miss Becca. "I hope you didn't take a ran into the house!"

"He wanted to, though. He was a stranger; but nice and pleasant-looking, and I'd a-taken him but for my promise to your pa. He went to the hotel, I suppose, 'bout two miles below here."

What made such a swarm of dimples creep over Jessica's satiny cheeks! It seemed to her the brightest morning she had ever known, though Becca came out and scolded her for dampening her feet and running out bare-headed.

How the sea glittered!—how the waves raced upon the beach! How sweetly the little beech-birds, swinging among the tall marsh grasses, whistled and called!

Miss Becca came out.

"See what a nice dog, Becca!" said Jessica, timidly.

Becca examined the great fellow with her eyes, while Jessica trembled.

"I suppose the great creature might be of service to us, in case we should meet—a man—in our walks," she said.

"He's very kind," said Jessica.

It was soon apparent that Pasha would follow her anywhere. He would stalk contentedly at her side, and when she sat down among the rocks, lie down at her feet, with his head upon her little shoe. He evidently grew very fond of Jessica, and Jessica was very fond of Pasha.

One day they were under the cliffs.

"Hark!" said Becca. "What's that?"

It was somebody who was whistling, very clearly—

"A fox jumped over the parson's gate."

"A man!" said Miss Becca. "If he comes here, I'll set the dog on him!" she added, fiercely.

A handsome man, somewhat under thirty, came around the rocks; then paused suddenly, lifting his hat.

Becca had no time to set the dog upon him. Pasha was off like a shot, yelping with delight. He leaped up, planting his great fore-paws upon his master's breast, and lapping his face.

"Down, down, Pasha! old fellow! Pardon, ladies! Misses Peppers, I am sure! I am sure I cannot be mistaken; and perhaps you remember my face—D'Albert, of Calford. I have been at the naval academy for the past year, and know your respected father well. You are seeking your health down here, Miss Peppers! Ah, and find it! You are looking finely."

Few men had ever been brave enough to compliment Becca. Perhaps that is why she mentioned the sex so tartly. Be that as it may, she forgot Jessica, and received Mr. D'Albert very civilly.

He was staying at the Oliver Hotel. Pasha was his property. He was on his way to Mrs. Green's, to pay the dog's bill.

The four walked down the sands together. Miss Becca did not see anything suspicious in the situation.

Perhaps she was a little bewildered at having a gentleman's arm to lean on, and a gentleman's strong hand to help her over the rocks and gullies.

As for Jessica, who tripped lightly ahead, with Pasha at her side, the sea sparkled brighter, and the waves raced more madly than ever. Her cheeks were like roses, and her eyes like diamonds.

By paying marked attention to Becca Mr. D'Albert managed to get a word and a glance from Jessica during his visits, which came weekly.

Mrs. Green stared.
"Well," said Becca, apologetically, "Mr. D'Albert is not like common men."

Certainly he was not to undertake the prosecution of so difficult a siege.

Demure little Jessica could not but smile at the patience and zeal with which her admirer continued his tactics.

It was a long time before Becca took alarm and guessed the truth.

Mr. D'Albert came to Mrs. Green's on Pasha's account. Pasha's bravery and intelligence was a subject upon which they all agreed.

Then Mr. D'Albert made their stay at the seaside much pleasanter by frequent sails and rows. He bided his time, and by-and-by could not be shaken off.

He loved Jessica, and Jessica had learned to love him!

Why he should not be her husband Becca could not say, especially as Mr. D'Albert coolly signified his intention of waiting any length of time for her pretty sister.

Becca, who had fled from Calford with Jessica, returned with her, engaged, with her father's consent, to Mr. D'Albert.

Mr. Peppers, taken back by the situation, had weakened, and finally yielded. Pasha also approved.

And at the wedding Mrs. Japenica had her opportunity to see Mr. D'Albert kiss his bride, Jessica.

ROSAMOND'S HUSBAND.

—30— CHAPTER XXIV.

AND Lord Kingsford drove home and ate his dinner in solitary state, for Tommy was now despatched to bed at a very early hour; and as he smoked his cigar, pacing the avenue in the moonlight, his mind was entirely taken up with his long interview that same afternoon with Rosamond.

Every word, every look, he recalled again and again. At least she was constant to him in one way. She would never marry, nay, though he had dangled the bait of a coronet before her eyes, and that is a bauble that dazzles most young ladies.

How furious she had been when she sprang up the steps, and how incredulous about Tommy's mother.

Once this visit of Tommy's to the south was over he would fight with fate no longer; he would claim Rosamond, unnatural mother though she was. Artful actress, there was something about her that drew him towards her, despite of all. He would rather have her little finger than all the rest of the women in the world put together.

Her look, her touch, her voice, had power to thrill every fibre of his heart—a power which no other living being ever could, would, or should possess. He was nearly revealing himself; his heart was for once on the eve of overmastering his head, and his heart was ultimately to carry the day.

She had successfully withstood one test—rank, and ere he restored her to favour he meant to try her by another—poverty.

He stood in the avenue, his cigar between his lips, his eyes fixed on the woods of Violet Hill, just visible across the valley.

"Little do our good neighbours know that the roof over these shelters the mistress of Armine Court," he said to himself with a smile, "and a very good mistress she will make, too," glancing at the pile behind him. "I wish I was as certain she would be a good mother—but," teasing his cigar into the grass with a sigh, "as she said herself to-day, no one could be cruel to Tommy; and after all," now putting his hands in his pockets as he slowly sauntered towards the open window of

the dining-room, "Tommy and I must only take our chance."

And time went by. Tommy is completely restored to health, and he has been left in charge of a friend of Allan's—a mature old dowager, Lady Greville, who has a grandson of his age, whilst his father takes his horses up to Leicester-shire and has some hunting, but he has not come for hunting alone.

He knows that the Brands have taken a small hunting-box near Melton Mowbray, and that there are no more constant "followers," than Colonel Brand and Miss Dane. He has not seen them yet.

He has good stabling for his nags, and is putting up at the Queen's Head Hotel along with at least fifteen other hunting men.

The first day he was out was wet—no Rosamond, no rheumatic Colonel Brand—but they had a good day's sport, nevertheless, and Allan came home in very fair spirits.

He had opened some of their eyes that day and no mistake. He was the only man out, except the first whip, who got over "Annerley Brook," flooded to the brim with a good eighteen feet of water.

After a tub, and changing his wet hunting things for dry clothes, Allan descended to the coffee-room quite ready for his dinner.

He was late—they were already at the soup and sherry, and conversation was both loud and brisk. At last it turned upon the day's run, and not a few curious eyes were fixed upon the dark, good-looking stranger, who took his place without shyness and called for his soup.

He was a flyer, and no mistake—a regular first-flight man, come up, they heard, from the Oakley pack, to ride their heads off. All very fine when a man rode horses like his—animals worth from two to four hundred guineas—but the beggar could ride. They must confess there was no finching about him.

This they had been discussing in a little knot before the fire previous to dinner, and it had been rumoured that he was not Mr. Kingsford as stated, but Lord Kingsford.

"Crabbie Crawford knows him," said a little foxy-faced gentleman, "but Crabbie is dining out—Crabbie is nothing if he is not a society man."

Despite of Crabbie's absence the stranger got on very well. He was a true sportsman, modest about his own exploits, enthusiastic about hunting, and by the time dinner was half over he was as much at home with everybody as if he had lived among them for the last month.

After a time the talk veered round to the fair sex. In this topic the new arrival took no sort of interest, but kept chatting on with another hunting maniac about "cubs and earth-stoppers."

However, at last the introduction of one name caused him to pause, and, so to speak, prick up his ears.

"What became of Miss Dane to-day?" inquired a light-haired young man, in a rather anxious tone of voice.

"She wasn't out to show us all the way, as she did on Friday," responded an elderly gentleman. "I dare say she'll get a bit slack in hunting now that she has other fish to fry—now"—grinning—"that she's going to be married."

At this announcement the stranger, who had been hitherto carefully selecting a head of celery to eat with his cheese, thrust it back into the glass bowl, and fixed his eyes upon the bearded man with a look of angry interrogation.

"Ah, I see you know her," he rejoined, complacently, in answer to this look. "She's a monstrous pretty girl, is she not? Just rides like a bird!"

"Who—who—is she going to marry?" asked her husband, bringing out the words with difficulty.

"He has been hard hit, too," thought the other. "Oh, to the great *parti* down here. A very good chap. Somers, elderly though, not suit-

able as to age, but any quantity of money, and that's the main thing."

"But she has money of her own."

"Pooh! a mere drop in the bucket, my dear sir. This man has seventy thousand pounds a year. He is a kind of Silver King in his way."

"But I did not hear that it was settled yet, Boyce," cried a cheery voice from lower down the table. "Never say die, old man; give us all a chance yet."

This was pleasant for Allan to hear his wife's name bandied about in this fashion. He must see her, speak to her, and put a stop to this at any cost.

"Well, I don't know what you call settled," drawled the other, facetiously. "I can only say that I saw her on his coach yesterday, on the box seat. That generally means business."

"Pooh! nonsense!" exclaimed the man at the foot of the table, contemptuously. "If every woman you saw on the box-seat was bound to marry the coachman it would be a nice state of affairs."

"Crawford, my dear boy," said the bearded one in a paternal manner, "you may as well give her up gracefully. We all know she's an uncommonly pretty girl, not a bit loud or fast, and a first-rate horse woman. Anyone of us would be proud to claim her; but this heavy weight—this seventy thousand pounds—clears the course and handicaps us all. Cheer up, cheer up; you're o'er young to marry yet. I wouldn't hear of it!"

At this crisis the latest comer pushed his chair back without any preamble or apology, got up and walked out of the room.

"Hullo! hullo! has the dinner disagreed with our flyer?" said the foxy-faced one, with a grin.

"I don't know about the dinner, can give no opinion about that, not being on familiar terms with his digestive organs, but I can tell you what has not suited him nor his mental digestion—the conversation about Miss Dane."

"Whew! sets the wind in that quarter! I wonder if she is any relation!"

"His sister, or his cousin, or his aunt," sang the facetious one. "Maybe he has gone to hunt up a second, and call us out one by one."

He had not gone to do anything of the kind. He had gone out to the stables to see the two horses he had out that day get their bucket of gruel apiece, and he bedded down. To sit at table and hear Miss Dane's name bandied about from lip to lip, to listen to speculations about the marriage of his wife, was rather too much to stand.

He had felt inclined to go round to the jolly-looking fellow with the black beard and knock him down, but still he asked himself quite coolly, once he had soothed his feelings with a cigar—

"Why the deuce should he! How were any of these cheery bachelors to know that Miss Dane's husband was sitting at the table?"

No, no; it was just as well for him, all things considered, that he had kept a quiet tongue in his head and not made a fool of himself, ardently as he had longed to throw a plate at his opposite neighbour. He had wisely repressed this savage idea, and behaved with the discretion befitting his nine-and-twenty years.

Certainly things had come to a crisis, and Rosamond must at length be told. He meant to tell her, but not quite, quite so soon.

Whatever happened he hoped she had not precipitated herself into an engagement with this Crescus. That would involve the tangled skein still further, and, bad as matters were, he saw very distinctly that they might still be worse.

CHAPTER XXV.

"THERE'S to be a grand fancy masked ball at a country house about five miles from this to-morrow," said Crabbie Crawford, button-holing Lord Kingsford late one evening in the smoking-room. "Everyone for counties round is going. I've leave to bring a friend. Will you come? Don't say no, if you'd rather say yes."

"Everyone! That would of course include Rosamond. Yes, he thought he would like to go. He was dying to see her, and in a fancy dress and a mask he would say a few things to her that he dare not in his present character."

"But I've not got any fancy kit!" he objected, after a pause.

"Oh, don't let that stand in your way. Nathan, from London, has sent a boxful down on hire, all sorts and sizes, and you can suit yourself to the masthead."

"All right then, I'll go. I suppose we don't give our names?"

"No, not till two o'clock—supper-time—when everyone unmasks; and it's no end of fun! Such surprises people get! There are no end of larks to be had, especially if you know who some of the girls are, and what they mean to wear, as I do!" triumphantly.

"Ah! Of course you mean to pass your information on to me!" said his friend, with prompt decision.

"Well, if mum is the word, I don't mind if I do. You see I'm rather sweet on two or three—a Miss Stewart, a Miss Fells, and Miss Glen."

"Is that all?" said the other, ironically. "I know Miss Glen. What is she going to appear in?"

"Oh, the Queen of the Fairies. No less and no more, and her friend is going as—what's this?—let me see," rubbing his forehead meditatively. "Oh, I've got it now, an Austrian Chanciness, and they are both to wear long white dominoes, with red stars on the right shoulder."

"You seem to have it all very pat. Pray, how did you find out?"

"Oh easily enough!" exultingly. "I merely tipped the ladies' maid, and she tipped me, the straight one," laughing boisterously at his own joke.

Lord Kingsford listened attentively to the artificers of some other ladies' toilettes to disarm suspicion, but made particular note of the white domino and star in his own mind, and of course there'll be no difficulty in finding out Rosamond, as she is a good half head the taller of the two.

The next evening beheld him dressed in the very splendid uniform of an Austrian Hussar, and most becoming it proved to his slight figure, as his man remarked to himself when his master, taking up mask and gloves, and throwing a top-coat over his arm, hurried downstairs quickly, in answer to various shouts of "Come along, Kingsford," from the hall, where half-a-dozen strange figures were assembled, notably a French clown, who was jumping about and cutting all manner of queer capers for the benefit of the assembled company.

There was a long-haired cavalier, rather uneasy about his wig; a very neat white cook, a Chinaman, a bigger minstrel, and a Spanish matador, but their light was quite put into the shade by the brilliant Hussar with clanking spurs and gold-laced jacket, who came down the hotel stairs last, but not least; in fact, as he descended they gave him "a hand," as they say in theatres, and quite a vigorous clapping was the welcome accorded him as he stood among them.

An omnibus conveyed the whole party from the Hall to the masked ball, and very lively they were; they sang and laughed, and talked and smoked, and chaffed each other, all but the Austrian Hussar, who sat in a far-up corner, his forehead drawn over his eyes, his arms folded. Evidently he was not in a merry mood; he was lost in his own thoughts, and debating in his mind what he would say to Rosamond when he met her.

They were rather late arrivals when they drove up to the brightly-lit Hall. Carriages were flashing away from the door, the band was playing, and a high buzz of voices and a most motley air pervaded every hole and corner. All the party masked and entered. They, like everybody else, seemed looking round stealthily and warily, and ever on their guard for fear they should be found out; but, as a while they, like the rest

of the world, became emboldened, and plunged among the other guests, all glaring at each other with reckless audacity.

The white Hussar did not follow his companions; he stood with his arms folded, in a distant doorway, alone, his eyes roving rapidly and eagerly round the room. He saw no less than four editions of Mary Queen of Scots, three Follies, half-a-dozen Swiss peasants, half-a-dozen fairies, hospital nurses, vivandieres, summers, winters—but yes, there was one white domino—with three men in attendance, and the other one was dancing. Gradually, carefully he approached, by wary steering among the waltzers, and found himself close beside her.

She was talking French, with much gesticulation, and with the most perfect ease. How different to her acquaintance with the tongue when they were in Paris years ago! A tall, stout mask, Henry the Eighth, probably the 700,000-pounder, said Allan to himself, was standing by. With the air of a proprietor, and with a certain conscious pride in the fluent French of the fascinating Chanciness, Allan advanced now with a deep bow, and in the same language craved the honour of a dance.

The lady looked at him searchingly, and, after some remark, accepted him a waltz rather early on her programme.

"I wonder who you are?" she said, as she scribbled down the word Hussar opposite No. 10, with a laugh, "or if you have the faintest idea of who I am. It's more than probable, my good sir, that you mistake me for somebody else; and, remember, if you are not a good dancer, I shall throw you over, for I'm very particular!" she remarked, with all the license of a mask.

"I know you perfectly," said the mask, still in French. "I know your name, who you are, where you come from, and all your history since you were a little girl; and as to dancing," looking round the room superciliously, "if I could not dance better than some of the people here I should go out and put an end to myself."

"The foreigner crows bravely," said a deep voice, and Allan beheld Orabelle Crawford in his fester's dress, his tongue in his cheek, his hands in his pockets, standing among the circle, who, catching his eyes, bestowed upon him one rapid-telling wink.

"The foreigner crows loudly enough, at any rate!" said Rosamond. There was no doubt that it was Rosamond. He recognized her hands—her pretty, little, slender hands. "But give me deeds, not words. I will prove him," looking round. "You say, my good sir, that you know my history, that you can tell all my life since I was quite a little girl. Pray answer me one question. Where did I spend most of my time after I left school? What was the name of the place?"

"Drydd!" to her amazement, dropped in one laconic syllable from beneath the stranger's black moustache.

"Yes, yes; I see you are a magician! I shall be quite afraid to dance with you."

It was someone, she told herself, that knew her and her mother. It was no secret that she had passed a good many years in that village among the Marshes, and her attention being taken off for an instant by another would-be suitor, when she turned her head again the Hussar was gone.

"Never mind," she said to herself, "I shall see him again at No. 10, and I shall cross-examine him well."

She had almost forgotten all about him when No. 10 came round, and advancing with a profound bow from some remote doorway the mysterious white Hussar claimed this, the Manolo waltz; and encircling her waist with a firm arm, they were soon swept away into the gay, eddying vortex.

The Chanciness (who had discarded her long white cloak) danced well, the Hussar still better. He had not boasted overmuch; he was her best partner of the evening, as he steered skilfully in and out, never losing step, never getting out of time, holding her just steadily and firmly. She cast her mind at once among all her acquaint-

ances, to see who this excellent dancer might be. Nothing in his step, or in anything about him, reminded her of anyone she knew. He was tall, and had dark hair and eyes; it was not Lord Kingsford; he never danced. It was someone who knew her.

"Who are you?" she said, with a laugh, showing all her pearl teeth beneath the lace of her mask, as, after a long spin, they paused for a few moments under the orchestra; but to this question the mask only replied by shaking his head in a very decided manner. "But you know you will have to declare yourself after supper, so you may just as well declare yourself now."

"Come along," he said, in English this time; "don't let us lose any more of this delicious waltz," and thus adjured, she, equally ready, once more floated off, and this time they kept it up to the very last bar.

"You must have some refreshment," said the mask, leading her rather imperiously towards a distant refreshment-room.

"No, no—thanks; I had an ice just now; but probably it's one for me and two for yourself," smiling.

"No! Then let us come and sit in the winter garden and get cool."

To this proposition she made no demur, and, arm-in-arm, they went down a long corridor into an enormous dimly-lit but still sufficiently light conservatory, which was already pretty full.

The mask evidently knew his way about, and conducted her to a retired bench, half-hidden, and yet not quite concealed, by a big Australian tree fern, and on which an adjacent coloured lantern threw sufficiency of light, whilst the music of a fountain close at hand lent its pleasant drowsy, dreamy, trickling noise to the whole scene, and a statue of the god Cupid, blindfold, but with one eye peeping under the handkerchief superintended, as it were personally, this charming little corner, where any moderately clever couple could see and hear everybody, and remain unperceived themselves.

"You can remove your mask if you are hot," said the Hussar, coolly, as he took a seat beside her. "No one can see you here."

"Except you," with a laugh, fanning herself rapidly.

"It does not matter about me in the least. Let me look at your hand and I'll tell you who you are."

"You make me quite afraid of you," holding out her right hand as she spoke; "but you are not as wise as you think."

He turned it over quite gravely, but with an air of deep respect, and said—

"You are Miss Dane—Miss Rosamond Dane."

"I wonder how you found that out! Supposing I say I am not!"

"You would be quite right—you are not in reality."

"And, pray, who else do you take me for? You may have two guesses," playfully.

"I don't want to guess; I know."

"You are very wise," ironically.

"I am," expressively, "wiser than most. You pass as unmarried to the world at large, but, in reality, you have been married for years. You are Mrs. Allan Gordon."

At this announcement—made to her by the Hussar in a low voice, leaning confidentially towards her—she uttered a little smothered exclamation, and dropped her fan at his feet. He picked it up very carefully, and, handing it back to her, said—

"Am I right or not?"

"You are in one sense, and not in another; but how did you find out my secret? There is only one person in the world who knows it besides myself and two women. He has told you!" she exclaimed, removing her mask with hurried fingers, and revealing great startled eyes, flaming with indignation, and a face as white as her gown.

"No one has told me your secret. I knew it always," mysteriously. "I can tell you your whole life if you wish."

"What—what do you know, you dreadful Hussar!" she asked, in a faint voice.

"I know of your school days, of your grand-

mother, of your lonely life at Drydd, till a stranger came—a stranger who rescued you from a tramp one summer's evening—now nearly six years ago."

"Yes, yes," she said, breathlessly.

"I know of your grandmother's death, your marriage, your trip to Paris."

"Yes," now trembling all over, "it is all true; but, oh, clever, clever mask, since you know so much, can you tell me what became of him—of Allan Gordon?"

"Perhaps I could," said the mask, significantly; "but I should have to ask you one or two questions first, Mrs. Gordon."

"Tell me," she gasped, with one hand to her throat, "is—he dead?"

"Would you be glad if I said 'yes'?" maliciously.

"Don't torment me nor play with my feelings, you hateful, wicked mask, but tell me what you know."

"Perhaps I may," he rejoined, "if you tell me one or two things first. Tell me," lowering his voice to a whisper, "tell me, Miss Dana, are you going to be married to this rich man with whom your name is so freely coupled—Mrs. Somers?"

"What is that to you?" she demanded, defiantly.

"Something; at any rate, I wish to know."

"Then your wish is not destined to be gratified."

"Be it so. You will hear no more of Allan Gordon."

This was a terrible alternative. The mask had a slow and impressive way of speaking (probably assumed) but that carried conviction with it to the ears of the pale and trembling Chanoine.

This hateful mask, with his cool manners, folded arms, Hessian spurred boots, and admirably shaped feet, with the ideal instep, was not, as she had at first thought, a confidant of Lord Kingsford's, for he knew nothing of Drydd, nor her first meeting with Allan. He was either a friend of Allan's or the devil!

"Am I to make any reply?" he asked, presently.

"Yes," she assented, feebly; "the gentleman you mention has asked me to marry him, but I have not given him an answer yet. I am to have a week to consider it."

"And what is your answer to be?" continued the mask, rather sharply.

"I think you are presuming too far. You are overstepping every boundary; even the license of a mask has limits," she said, with uncontrollable indignation.

"And I do not—there is the difference," decidedly. "Are you going to give me an answer, Mrs. Gordon? Are you going to marry this man or not?" he demanded, with a ring of repressed emotion—it might be passion in his voice.

"I am! since you will know," she replied, turning on him, and confronting him defiantly.

"You are!" setting her roughly by the arm, "and why?"

"Pray strike me!" she exclaimed, with withering sarcasm. "I know you would like to do it, white Hussar! You have no scruples of any kind, and it is not a bit more cowardly than forcing yourself into the confidence of a miserable woman, who is completely in your power."

The mask dropped her wrist with an air of compunction, and she proceeded in a low, quiet tone,—

"What is it you want from me? Is it money?"

"No, no," with energy; "Don't think that of me," anxiously. "I am a rich man; but tell me why you are going to marry for money! What is money to you?" he asked, in an eager, almost frenzied whisper.

"You, who already know so much, must know that I have nothing in my own home to compensate me for my unhappy past—nothing!" wringing her hands. "My mother and I have always been strangers. We never met till I was eighteen, and since then circumstances have estranged us. We have nothing in common. I am tired of this hollow, gay life; it means no-

thing to me; I want a peaceful home of my own, where I can do some good."

"Meaning when you will have a weak-minded man to deal with, and the spending of a thousand pounds a week," said the Hussar, bitterly.

"You are wrong! I shall have enormous possibilities of doing good. I shall only look upon myself as a steward for that money. I shall build schools, almshouses, tenements, an orphanage. I shall build and endow churches."

"Stop, stop! Spare me the edifying recital!" putting out his hand; "and this rich old man; you love him, of course—for his money," with a sneer.

"I do not love him. You may spare your sneers. I don't profess to love him, and he is content."

"He thinks, poor old fool, that it will come in time."

"He does not, you wicked, hateful mask! He knows that I respect and like him, and that is enough for him."

"It would not be enough for me, then," calmly refolding his arms.

"You—and who cares for you? No one, I'm sure!" mockingly.

"Very likely not," quite placidly; "but some day or other you may see and love a younger and handsomer man. Goodness knows you might easily do that," contemptuously; "and you may even run away with him. I wonder if it will be 'enough for him' under these circumstances."

"I see you brought me here only to insult me!" said Rosamond, rising with much dignity.

"You need not come with me; I prefer finding my own way back alone."

"Stay!" rising and rudely interposing himself between her and her only mode of exit. "Do not leave me in anger. You have told me that you are going to marry again, and this time for money; that you may do good works, and thus, I suppose, to your own conscience expiate some deed that wears and frets it day by day—if conscience you have. And talking of evil deeds, conscience, and such matters brings me to my third, and last question. Tell me," he said, leaning over her, and taking each of her hands in his. "Tell me, Rosamond Gordon, on your honour and word," and looking her full in the face, "what have you done with your child?"

CHAPTER XXVI.

"AND is even this not to be spared me?" she cried, staggering slightly, with athen lips and wild, agonised eyes; then sinking once more down on the seat from which she had just risen she buried her face in her hands, and wept bitterly.

The masked Hussar standing by immovable, and as unmoved as fate, observed her shaking shoulders, observed the tears one by one stealing through her fingers and falling on her lap without a quiver of pity.

Fortunately for them the winter garden was empty—the weird strains of one of Strauss's valses had called all dancers back to the ball-room.

How strange it sounded, this dance music and this accompaniment of a woman's sobs; but these sobs had no effect upon Allan.

"It is remorse," he said to himself, emphatically. "She is sorry now, and well she may be! Well, I am waiting," he said, when the first passionate outburst had subsided and her sobs had died away into long-drawn, gasping sighs.

Her next movement took him completely off his guard.

"How dare you!" she cried, vehemently, "you bad man! who, for your own ends, wish to get me into your power, and to crush me to the earth!" pausing and struggling for composure, as she gazed at him with wet, defiant eyes, as of some poor deer driven to bay. "How dare you so much as name my poor little baby to me! Did you think—did you hope, that I murdered it?" she asked, with renewed pas-

sion; "you, who I suppose, are some messenger of the child's father, who deserted me—"

"I know that. Whatever he did or did not do, you deserted your unfortunate child, Mrs. Gordon."

"If I! Why not say I murdered it at once! Don't scruple to think it, if you please. It does me no harm, nor it, poor little angel."

"But you did desert it," he continued, persistently. "You gave it to Mother Nan to nurse; you paid her for its keep—seven shillings a week—and then you forgot it!"

"How plainly it is seen that it is a man that is speaking!" she exclaimed, mockingly.

"No woman would talk so foolishly. A woman would know that no other woman would abandon her helpless little infant! Do you place me, oh, clever, far-seeing, fortune-telling mask, below the very animals!" with biting irony. "Why, even a cat would not desert a kitten—a hen her chickens! Pray, how much lower in the social scale than them do you consider me?"

"You would make an admirable actress, Mrs. Gordon, but still you have not answered my question. You had a baby, I believe. What did you do with it? Where is it?"

"Oh, why should I have to tell you?" fiercely. "What is it to you to know where it is? Is it that he may know?—is he dead?"

"Never mind him. Tell me—tell me where you left it."

"In Drydd churchyard," she gasped. "In Drydd churchyard. Now are you satisfied? Under a little green mound near the Lych gate. You can see it if you choose, with a cross at the head, with no name."

"Poor little darling, it had none! You who seem to hate me, to know the worst of me, to revel in all my most agonising griefs, must be quite happy now to know that I had never even the consolation of holding my baby in my arms, of even seeing its face, like other more fortunate mothers."

"If"—half-talking to herself—"oh! if I had only seen its dear little face once, to have the memory of it to think of, to live upon; if I had even held its dead body in my arms it would have been something, but oh!"—with tears raining down her face—"to think that I never saw it at all!"

"If ever I got to Heaven to think that I shall not know my own child! Oh, if it had only lived! I would not have minded the other loss so much!"

"But I always understood that it had lived," said the mask, in a hoarse and rather shaken voice. "How was it you never saw it?"

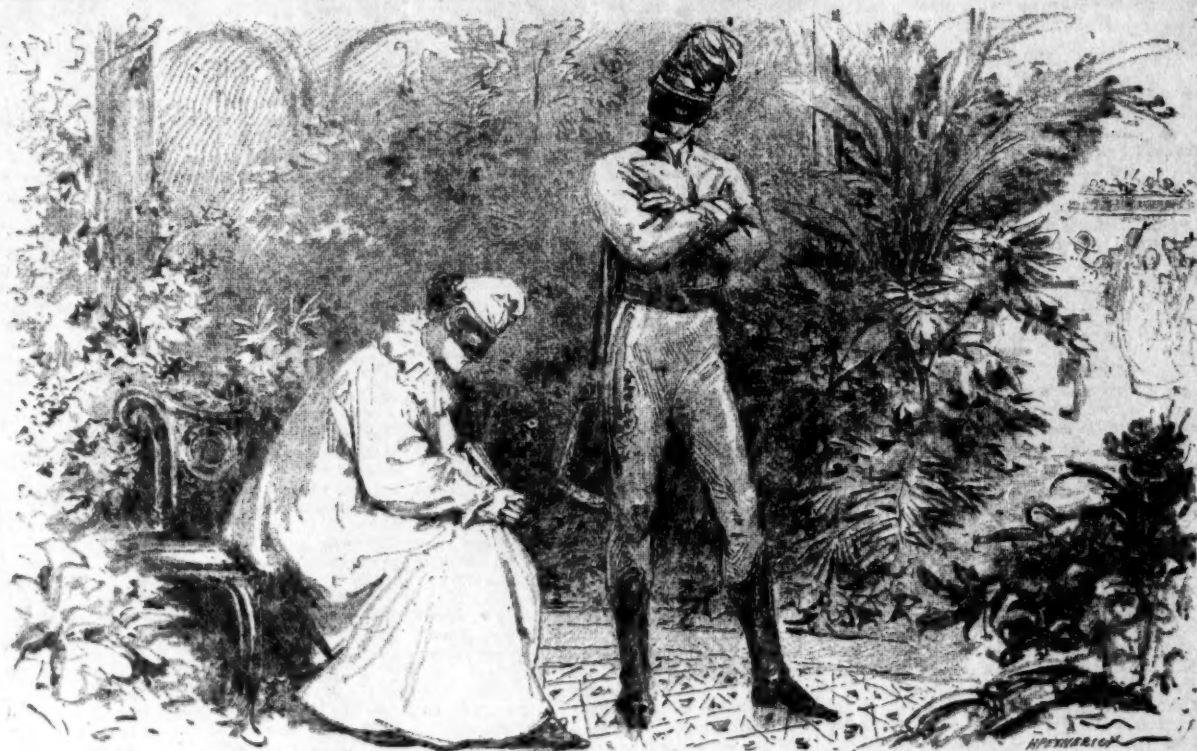
"I was ill, dying. They all thought the one grave would hold us both. How I wish it had! And for days I knew nothing. I was as if I was dead, and when I came back to consciousness and looked for it, for all I had, for what was to be everything to me, the cradle was empty, the little clothes I had toiled over late and early were folded away. It was dead and buried."

There was no mistaking the agony of the mother's heart, her firm belief in the death of the infant, her grief after five years still fresh, and keen, and pitiful, her quivering lips, her tearful eyes.

Allan could not trust himself to speak. He turned away, and looked intently into the conservatory in silence.

Poor Rosamond, to be some day—soon, oh, very soon—happy Rosamond, although Tommy had never worn the dress nor lain in the cradle. He felt that he would like to go down upon his knees and kiss the hem of her dress, and humbly beg her pardon for having so long wronged her in thought. It was, then, Mrs. Brand who had made away with her baby. No wonder there was a yawning gulf between her and her daughter.

"I hope you are satisfied now, and will permit me to return to the ball-room," said that young lady, at last. "If having torn and lacerated every feeling that is left in my heart to their utmost extent, if having caused me the most poignant anguish I have known for a long time, if having opened old wounds afresh, please you, you have every right to be a happy man. You



"AND WHAT IS YOUR ANSWER TO BE?" THE MARK ASKED, RATHER SHARPLY.

have succeeded in your endeavours in a manner worthy of a better cause. And now, sir"—as a sudden hush came in the band, a loud sound of laughing, and a buzz of talk—"harken, the clock strikes two. Time is up. You will have the goodness to unmask."

Seeing his evident reluctance, his desire to escape, she sprang between him and the passage, and said,—

"Know who you are I will. Oh! mine enemy," with a strangely unpleasant laugh, "it is my turn now. You shall not escape. Wherever you go I will follow you, so unmask! unmask!"

But still he did not move, but stood irresolute. "If you will not it shall be done for you. I will call one of the stewards. I will proclaim you to everyone. I will say that presuming on this covering over your false face you have persecuted me most cruelly all the evening, and now are afraid to take the consequences. You coward!"

This was a taunt there was no withstanding. So the white Hussar said,—

"Patience, patience, and you shall see who I am," as with slow and lingering fingers he untied the mask, removed it from his face with still slower movement, and disclosed to Rosamond's petrified, horrified gaze the familiar features of Lord Kingsford.

"You never suspected that it was me," he said, in a rather hesitating manner, as he glanced at her appealingly.

"I never did. I never thought so badly of you. Oh! I would not have believed it," gazing into his face as if he were some new and horrible species of the human race—as if she could not believe her eyes. "What object had you in raking up my past, in talking to me"—with trembling lips—"of my poor little dead baby. There are other ways of giving pain than striking or stabbing people, just as cruel, as cowardly, and as unmanly. I never, never thought, with a sob in her voice, "that Tommy's father could have—"

could have"—and here she found further speech impossible.

"Rosamond, my darling Rosamond! Listen to me, I implore you," he urged, taking her by the hand in a distracted manner.

"Rosamond, your darling!" she cried, turning once more towards him with a face of flame.

"That is enough. You forget that you are a married man, my lord, and you forget that you are a gentleman, as you have forgotten all the evening that I am nothing but a defenceless woman, whom you have amused yourself with cross-questioning, torturing, and finally insulting, and now"—sweeping her satin train aside and confronting him with growing angry eyes—

"as long as you and I live, Lord Kingsford, never presume to speak to me again," and holding her head very high, with the gait of an offended princess, Rosamond walked down the conservatory—was beset by a crowd of eager would-be or defrauded partners the instant she appeared in the door, and was at once lost to sight, whilst Lord Kingsford remained standing exactly where she had left him, looking like one who has received some violent and stunning and unexpected blow, and with feelings that may be better imagined than described.

The Chanoinesse—women are better at keeping up a part than men—danced with her usual *dan* and spirit for the remainder of the night, and had to submit to a little mild chaff anent her very, very, long and marked absence in the conservatory with the white Hussar.

People said she was quite the beauty of the evening, but that was nothing new. Strangers were, as usual, enthusiastic; but her own friends thought her not looking her best.

She was very pale; her gaiety seemed not very spontaneous; and one or two of her dearest lady friends whispered behind their fans that she "looked as if she had been crying." She had evidently had a scene with that mysterious white Hussar. Who could he have been? Probably some old lover. Ah, these old lovers! How

tiresome they are, and why will they turn up especially when they are not wanted."

As for the white Hussar, he never appeared again in the ball-room. He made his way home alone, and was very reticent to all questions anent how he had enjoyed himself, when his merry companions, looking very fagged indeed, and as if they had been up all night—which, by the way, they had—met at breakfast next morning.

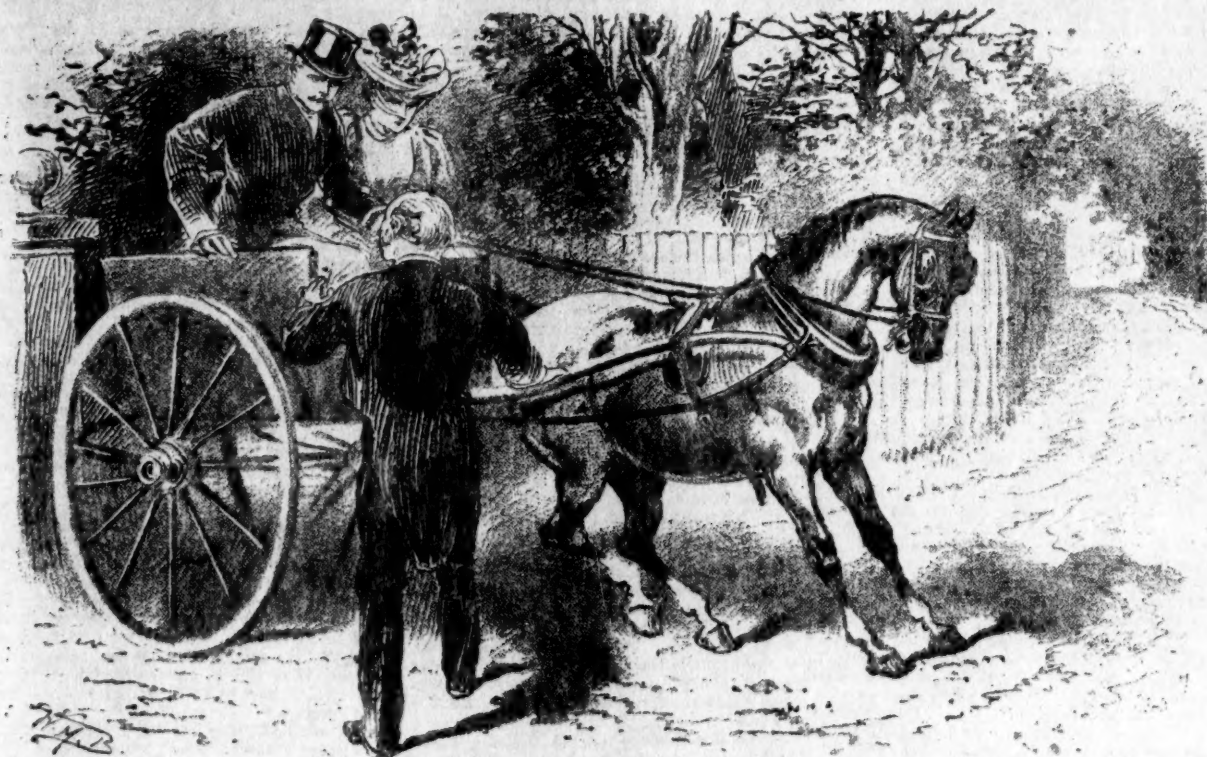
"You had no end of a case on with the pretty Chanoinesse," said one, facetiously. "Don't let old Somers catch you at it; and you seemed to be having it pretty well all your own way too."

Query. Had he?

(To be continued.)

MAN is said to be the only creature that shaves. But this is not so. A South American bird called the "mot-mot" actually begins shaving on arriving at maturity. Naturally adorned with long blue tail feathers, it is not satisfied with them in their natural state, but with its beak nips off the web on each side for a space of about 2in., leaving a neat little oval tuft at the end of each.

THE APPARENT WASTEFULNESS OF NATURE.—Life is sown broadcast, only to be followed almost immediately by a destruction nearly as sweeping. Nature creates by the million, apparently that she may destroy by the myriad. She gives life one instant, only that she may snatch it away the next. The main difference is that, the higher we ascend, the less lavish the creation, and the less sweeping the destruction. Thus, while probably but one fish in a thousand reaches maturity, of every thousand children born six hundred and four attain adult age. That is, nature flings aside nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand fishes as useless for her purposes, and two out of every five human beings.



"GOOD GRACIOUS, PAGET!" EXCLAIMED GEOFFREY, "YOU CAN'T MEAN THAT YOU HAVE BEEN TOLD NOT TO ADMIT US!"

TRAGEDY AT ROSE COTTAGE.

—101—

CHAPTER IX.

GEOFFREY VISCOUNT FANE walked home after he had left Meta Rivers at her own lodge gates with a strange feeling of uneasiness at his heart.

Geoff was not romantic or emotional. He was a thorough Englishman, with a hatred of scenes, and a distrust of mysteries; the very last person in the world to fancy there must be something wrong about a stranger because he spoke little of his past. Yet all the same, the young Viscount was conscious of a growing aversion to Dr. Bertram, which had well-nigh sprung into open rage at the doctor's cruel slander of Paul Hardy.

"No man would go out of his way to be spiteful without an object," reflected Geoff, as he strode homewards, "so Bertram must have some motive for slandering dear old Paul; but what is it? He can't be jealous of him; the two move in such different spheres. Hardy's heart and soul are in his work and among his poor. We have hard work to get him to spare us an afternoon now and again, old friends as we are, and certainly he would not go to Bankside for anything but a formal call, so that Bertram need not fear his influence over Mrs. Rivers. Then Meta! Well, from her own showing there is no love lost between her and Bertram. Of course, if the doctor were in love with her he would see a rival in every unmarried man in the place, though I must say Hardy is the last fellow in the world likely to woo any girl. I have it. Dr. Bertram is jealous of me, and his slander of Hardy was meant to provoke me to a quarrel. He knew I should take up the cudgels for my old friend—that's it. He has found out that I care (that's a mild expression) for Meta, and he wants to choke me off. He's gone on a wrong tack though, for I hardly ever enter Mrs. Rivers' house. My meetings with her daughter have always been at the Castle. Besides, it would take a stronger power

than the doctor's to part me from Meta against my will."

Geoffrey Fane had never realized until to-night how much he cared for the playmate of his childhood. He had always been fond of Meta—a few months ago he would have said "she was just like a sister" to him, but now he knew better. He was a good brother, and an affectionate one, but not one of his sisters was as dear to him as the lonely brown-eyed girl at Bankside, to win whom he felt now he would give up anything in the world.

"I think she likes me," he reflected, "but perhaps it is only as Ida's brother. I wish I had spoken out to-night before that brute of a doctor turned up and foisted his unwelcome company upon us. Poor little Meta! I wish she was of age now instead of having to wait nearly another year; but if I can only persuade her to trust herself to me, I don't think we shall have much trouble with her mother. I have always understood that Mrs. Rivers cared nothing whatever for her daughter, and was rather thankful than otherwise to anyone who took Meta off her hands for any time, long or short."

It was a perfect August night, and Geoff found his father smoking a cigar on the terrace, though the rest of the family had retired.

"You are coming out in a new character," said the Earl, pleasantly. "I never knew you anxious to act as a young lady's escort before."

Lord Fane took a seat by his father. There were always half-a-dozen or so of basket lounge chairs on the terrace, which was a favourite resort of the whole family.

"I have got a deal I should like to say to you, father," began the young man, "if you are not in a hurry."

"I am in no hurry at all. I told Jones an hour ago that no one need sit up for me. I would be answerable for the shutting of the drawing-room windows. Well, what is it Geoff? No scrape of any kind, I suppose. You have given me so little anxiety in your life that I

have never had to dread a serious talk with you."

"I don't know if you will call it a scrape," said Geoffrey, frankly, "but I am quite sure mother will be pleased. I want to marry Meta Rivers."

"Good gracious!"

"I don't see why you need be so surprised," said Geoffrey in a rather injured tone, "you have always seemed fond of Meta."

"My dear boy," exclaimed the Earl, "I love the girl only after my own. Her father was my dearest friend, and in all the world there is no one I would more gladly welcome as your wife."

"Then why did you seem surprised?" demanded Geoff, still a little huffily.

"Because, first and foremost, I never saw you pay Meta any attention, and next, nowadays young men seldom fall in love with girls they have known all their lives; it is generally a case of losing their hearts to a perfect stranger, and expecting their family to regard her as perfection because they do."

Lord Fane laughed heartily.

"Well, I have been fond of Meta ever since I can remember; but until to-night I never quite knew which way my wishes tended."

"And you are sure you know now?"

"Perfectly. If I can only win Meta's love I shall be quite happy."

"You seem strangely depressed about it," said Lord Hillington, kindly. "So far as I can tell I should say you had an excellent chance. Without wanting to make you conceited, Geoff, you must know you are a very good looking young fellow. Then Meta has been no where, so you can't have a rival."

"If I have a rival it's that scoundrel Bertram."

"Goodness!" exclaimed his father; "being in love must have turned your brain, Geoff. Why, Meta is barely civil to the poor fellow, and it isn't likely a penniless doctor from no where in particular would dare to raise his eyes to Miss Rivers, of Bankside."

"Have you seen much of him?"

"He doesn't come here. Your mother can't bear him, and I suspect has a fear his good looks might prove too attractive to the girls. I have met him elsewhere, and thought him a very pleasant fellow, knows his place and gives himself no airs."

Then and there Geoffrey gave his father a full account of that night's events. He began with Meta's confidence, the girl's secret dread of Dr. Bertram; her intense desire to go to America and claim the protection of her Aunt Penelope. He told of Bertram's sudden appearance, his persistent allusions to the tragedy at Rose Cottage, his unwarranted slander of Paul Hardy, and finally Geoff's own refusal to shake hands with the man who had so maligned his friend.

Lord Hillington listened with unflinching interest; but he was silent so long after Geoffrey had finished speaking that his son grew uneasy.

"Surely, father, you don't blame me! In my place you would have done the same."

"In your place at your age I am afraid I should have knocked the fellow down," said the Earl, frankly. "No, I don't blame you, Geoff; but I wish to goodness this had never happened."

"Why?" demanded Geoff. "That cur can't have any power to injure us."

"Not by himself," admitted Lord Hillington, slowly; "but he is said to have the greatest possible influence over Mrs. Rivers. He may succeed in persuading her to leave Essex, at any rate, for the coming winter."

"Well, we could spare her," remarked Geoffrey, who had no affection for the lady whose son-in-law he wished to become.

"Yes, we could spare her; but could we spare Meta? Apart from your courtship, Geoffrey, I should not like the little girl to leave home under no more congenial companionship than that of her mother and Bertram."

"Meta would have to stay behind. I know my mother would invite her on a long visit, or, we could hasten our marriage."

"My dear boy," said the Earl, cheerfully, "hadn't you better be certain that Meta consents to be engaged to you before you talk so glibly of hastening your marriage?"

"You know what I meant," said Geoff, gruffly; "but, father, why should Bertram slander Paul Hardy, unless to provoke a quarrel with us?"

"I can't say. I rather wish Hardy had not chosen just this time to go abroad."

Geoff was up in arms in his friend's defence.

"Surely you can't think—"

"My dear boy, don't get indignant, you have no cause, for I believe in Paul Hardy as I believe in you. I regret his absence, because if Bertram is really spreading this vile slander he ought to know of it, and I suppose there are minds base enough to imagine that his leaving Hillington as soon as possible after the tragedy might mean he had a hand in it."

"But his journey was planned before. He had actually gone home to settle the date of it with his mother and sisters when he came back to give his evidence."

"I wish he had not come back to give it," said the Earl, very gravely. "Now, Geoff, don't fly into a passion, but hear me out. You and I, who know him well, know Paul Hardy is incapable of falsehood; but to strangers there is a thread of improbability in his story which might make them suspicious."

"You will say in another moment that Bertram was justified in his slanders," growled Lord Fane; but the Earl knew his son thoroughly, and only loved him better for his eagerness in his friend's cause.

"I shall not. I consider Bertram has behaved shamefully; but just think for a moment, Geoff, of the story Hardy told at the inquest."

"Well?"

"Does it not strike you as odd that such an extraordinary-looking man should have escaped all notice? He must have left Hillington. He must, indeed, first have arrived here; yet at every railway-station within ten miles all knowledge of him is denied. It is (to an incredulous outsider) as though Paul Hardy had been enabled to see him at Rose Cottage just to prevent that poor girl being branded as a suicide."

"You mean that Hardy invented the story?"

"I do not. I mean that strangers who do not know the man or understand the beauty of his character might suspect the story was invented."

"How about the two people who also saw the stranger?"

"Unfortunately neither are to be called independent witnesses. The woman who cleans the church is in some sort the servant of the clergy, and the other party does not bear a very good character, and would be fairly open to a bribe."

"You speak as if you held a brief against Hardy."

Lord Hillington sighed.

"I wish with all my heart that poor girl had gone anywhere else than Rose Cottage, and that her death had not taken place there. At first I thought the best thing was not to stir in the matter, that the kindest course for all persons was to leave the tragedy to drop into a merciful oblivion, but now I am not so sure."

"I can't think it right for any mystery to be left unsolved," said Geoff, gravely.

"You are young, and have not learned yet that it is sometimes best to let sleeping dogs lie. You see, Geoffrey, from the evidence it is perfectly clear that poor young creature believed her husband to be staying in Hillington, that she knew him to have been here at some recent date. From her appearance and the evidence of those who spoke to her she was certainly a lady; consequently, her husband must have been a gentleman. If you only think a moment impartially, my boy, you will see how that narrows the area for suspicion. It seemed to me that to persist in the inquiry might bring a crushing blow on one of our neighbours. No amount of inquiry would bring back the dead girl, while it might do an irreparable injury to the living, therefore I told Paul Hardy the best thing was to leave the affair shrouded in mystery."

"You are thinking of the Carstons!" said Lord Fane, impetuously. "Well, of course, I know that Tom is a regular boulder, but—"

"I mentioned no names," said his father, quietly, "and I advise you to follow my example. But if we find Bertram is really spreading this slander against Hardy why my course is clear. I shall send for one of the first detectives in London, and confide the case to him, telling him; as the father of a grown-up son, I have a personal interest in finding out which of the young men in this neighbourhood posed as 'Mr. Ashlyn.' It may be rather an expensive affair, but we must not think of that."

"And meanwhile Meta—"

"My dear boy, your next step is to discover whether she will consent to become Lady Fane. Until you have settled that question we can't do anything in that quarter. When once your wooing has been successfully accomplished I promise to go myself to Bankside and plead your cause with Mrs. Rivers."

It was so much a matter of course for Meta to meet Ida Fane nearly every day that Geoff fully expected to see his little sweetheart at the Castle on the following afternoon; but when Meta did not appear he was reassured by hearing Ida settle with her mother that she should drive over quite early the next day to Bankside, and bring her friend back to lunch.

"I'll drive you, Ida," volunteered Lord Fane, "then there will be some one to look after the pony while you are doing your interminable shopping in Hillington."

Lady Ida accepted the offer promptly. All the girls were fond of their brother, and though this particular sister was his favourite, any one of the three would have voted Geoffrey the best of brothers had their opinion been desired.

"We need not go in," said Ida, as they turned into the avenue leading to the house. "Mrs. Rivers grows more insufferable every time I see her, and I rather fancy lately she has taken a dislike to me."

"She never cared much about any of us," agreed Lord Fane. "I have often wondered what possessed poor Rivers to marry her."

"The enigma is quite beyond me," said Lady Ida; "but I feel convinced he repented ever after. It was hard on Meta he should die. Now if Mrs. Rivers had departed this life I fancy

Meta and her father would have been very happy together."

They had stopped now beneath the grand porticoed entrance, and Geoffrey alighting rang the bell; Gates himself appeared in answer, and it struck Lord Fane that the butler (whom he had known since his childhood) looked very ill at ease.

"Is Miss Rivers at home?"

"Not at home, my lord."

Geoff returned to his sister, and after a moment's parley again interviewed the butler.

"Can you tell me which way Miss Rivers has gone? My sister, Lady Ida, wishes particularly to see her, as my mother wanted us to bring Miss Rivers back to lunch."

The butler shook his head, and repeated in formal tones,—

"Not at home, my lord."

And then, seeing nothing else to be done, the brother and sister drove off both decidedly discomfited.

"If I had not known Gates all my life, and known that he was sober as a judge, I should really think that he had been partaking too freely of the contents of the wine-cellar," Geoffrey remarked to his sister; "really I never saw anyone whose manner puzzled me so much."

"And Meta never does go out at eleven o'clock in the morning, unless it is to walk to Hillington for her mother, and she can't be there now or we should have met her."

But when they reached the lodge gates, just outside stood the butler panting as one little used to rapid exercise. He must have followed them by the garden path, which being more direct and less winding than the carriage drive, had enabled him to reach the gate before the pony-carriage.

He waited till they had driven through, then, as Geoffrey drew up, he said, respectfully,—

"I beg your pardon, my lord, for answering you as I did just now; but I could not, so to say, help it. While I am Mrs. Rivers's servant I have to obey her orders."

"Good gracious, Gates!" exclaimed Geoffrey, "you can't mean that you have been told not to admit us!"

"Those are Mrs. Rivers's orders, my lord; neither the Earl nor Countess, nor any member of their family is to be admitted; whoever they ask for my answer is to be the same, 'Not at home!'"

Gates was not an ordinary servant; he had been at Bankside before Meta's birth. He had served her dead father very faithfully; it was the thought of this which made Geoffrey treat him more as a humble friend than a dependent.

"Can you give me any reason for this, Gates? My mother looks on your young lady almost as one of her own children. My sister, here, is devoted to her. Miss Rivers has been at the Castle day after day, as if it had been her home. We have none of us seen Mrs. Rivers lately, so we can't have offended her. What does it mean?"

"I'm blessed if I can tell you, my lord; unless, begging your and her ladyship's pardon for speaking so frankly, my mistress has given way to so many fads and fancies, that she's gone clean off her head at last. Yesterday she gave me the order, and when I stared at her, for really I couldn't believe my own ears, she just said that if I didn't care to obey her there were plenty of butlers who would. So I made up my mind the first of the family from the Castle who came should know the rights of it; though, as Mrs. Rivers's servant, I'd not disobey her on her own premises."

"And Miss Meta," asked Lady Ida, sadly; "is she really at home? Did she see us drive up and know that we were refused admittance?"

Gates shook his head sorrowfully.

"I fear so, my lady. Miss Meta's looked just like a little white ghost ever since her mother sent for her yesterday. What Mrs. Rivers said to her then it's not for me to guess at, but my young lady's hardly spoken since, and though I'm only a servant, my lord, it makes my blood boil to think that she, who ought to be the lady of Bankside, should be put upon and

elighted as though she were a nobody, while that interloping doctor orders everything as though he were master of us all, which, begging his pardon, he never shall be, for the day he marries the mistress I leave Bankside."

The brother and sister drove on about a mile in perfect silence. Ida was too dazed and stunned to speak; Geoffrey too angry to trust himself to words.

At last, choking back a sob, his sister looked into his face and said,—

"Geoffrey, I see it all now. Dr. Bertram means to marry Mrs. Rivers, and between them they will break Meta's heart."

CHAPTER X.

WHEN Lewis Bertram first made the acquaintance of the mistress of Bankside he had not the least intention of laying siege to her affections or even of becoming her resident physician.

Dr. Bertram was a man who had in his time played many parts. A gentleman in education, manner and appearance, there was yet a certain amount of mystery about his birth. No one remembered ever meeting a relation of his, and though in conversation he occasionally alluded to "my family tree," or "the old homestead," no one had been able to draw any definite information about either.

There were many stories current about the man. The most popular, that in earlier youth he had been a nihilist, and that now having retired from some secret brotherhood he had to pass the rest of his days under an assumed name, lest the members of the society he had deserted should discover him and visit summary vengeance on his treachery.

This was quite a favourite legend with Dr. Bertram's friends. It explained so much that would otherwise have been puzzling, particularly why the doctor had no diploma or certificate, and why he never alluded to his past life.

A well-known London medico (whose sister was for a short time one of Dr. Bertram's admirers) declared the man was a charlatan on the face of it, since he would not say where he had qualified, or what degree he held; but Bertram retorted that while he did not attempt to practise medicine, no one had a right to pry into his capabilities, and that the title of "doctor" was often assumed by those who lectured on such subjects as mesmerism or hypnotism.

Still, though his lectures and séances were well attended, the profits were comparatively small after all expenses had been met, and Mrs. Rivers' proposal that he should accompany her to Bankside, with free quarters and a salary of three hundred a-year, was a most welcome suggestion. The doctor was, however, far too clever to jump at it at once.

"My dear lady," he said, in the full melodious voice which somehow always had a foreign inflection, "you forget I have no diploma or certificate which English physicians recognise. Your friends would say you were trusting your health to the skill of a dangerous quack, and that such people are to be avoided, dear lady, even though they may be able to cure you."

"I am my own mistress," said Mrs. Rivers, more set than ever on carrying off Bertram in triumph to Bankside. "No one has a right to question what I do. You understand my complaint and no one else does. Your remedies give me relief, other people's only increase my pain. If I offer you the post of my private physician no one can prevent your accepting it."

Dr. Bertram hesitated.

"Other people might have less faith than you, madam, and I tell you frankly that for my cures to take effect requires perfect faith on the part of the patient. Your resident medical attendant would naturally be expected to prescribe for your daughter and your household. That is why I hesitate."

Juliet Rivers loved money. For a rich woman she was indescribably mean, but in this case her desire to secure Dr. Bertram's attendance conquered even her economy.

"You need attend only myself," she answered, promptly. "Meta rarely ails anything, and there is an old surgeon at Hillington who does well enough for the servants."

"You see," explained Lewis Bertram, "having no English diploma I should not be recognized as a qualified medical man. Your servants might object to my methods, and if by chance one of them died I could not even give a certificate of death."

Mrs. Rivers shivered.

"Why talk of such gloomy things, doctor? Your province is to cure. Well, in spite of all your objections, I repeat my offer. Will you accompany me to Bankside next week?"

"I shall be delighted."

In those earlier days he had no thought of ever becoming more to Mrs. Rivers than what he was now. He would indeed have laughed at the idea of marrying a woman nearly twenty years his senior; but when he reached Bankside the place was a perfect revelation to him. He had visited once or twice at great houses, but he had never seen so much power in the hands of one woman.

The late Mr. Rivers started his married life with an income almost equal to Lord Hillington's, but the Earl had brought up a large family, had exercised lavish hospitality, and so, without being in difficulties, had certainly lived fully up to his means.

Rivers, on the contrary, early disappointed of domestic happiness, had not cared to entertain friends who might guess the skeleton at his hearth; for the last ten years of his life he did not spend a quarter of his income; Mrs. Rivers during her widowhood spent even less, and now, apart from the estate and its revenues, she must have (Bertram calculated), at least a hundred and thirty thousand pounds, which simply accumulated interest and compound interest, making in itself a noble fortune at her own disposal, though the estate must revert to her daughter at her death.

Bertram wanted money, wanted it badly; if he could only persuade Mrs. Rivers that her life depended on his care she might increase his salary largely, and in time be induced to make a will in his favour.

On a short visit to London the wily doctor took the opportunity to examine Mr. Rivers' will at Somerset House, which disappointed him a little, since it was clear that not only the estate and its revenues must go to Meta, but the principal of the sum left by her father in the funds; still, Mrs. Rivers must have over fifty thousand pounds at her disposal, and that sum must be increasing every year.

But Bertram made a strange discovery on his return to Bankside. Mrs. Rivers was not merely glad to see him, she welcomed him back with a jealous exacting affection, and showed by her questions that she was most curious as to the object of his recent absence, and that she would desperately resent his forming an attachment to anyone but herself.

"I wanted her to like me; I thought she might treat me as a sort of adopted son, and leave me a thumping legacy when she died, but that is not her view; she means to live, and if I have any wish to finger her money it must be as her husband."

The idea was repugnant to him; his character was not high or noble, but he possessed the power of strong, passionate love, of mad devotion for a time to the object of that love.

Before he ever saw Mrs. Rivers he had given his heart to a woman young enough to have been her daughter. His love had not a penny, Mrs. Rivers could give him with her hand a splendid fortune. He was a clever man, and knew that with money the world would be open to him.

It was an awful struggle, and all the more painful because it had to be carried on in secret, and no living creature suspected it. The woman who thought her gold might bring his love never dreamed that she had a rival, the girl who had given him all she had in the world, her own sweet self, never thought that he could be false to her. Poverty might keep him from openly claiming her, the objections of his family (for the poor child believed implicitly in that "family tree" so often vaguely mentioned) might part them for a

time, but that he stayed away from her of his own free will, and passed the time in dancing attendance on another woman she never dreamed. Why, she would have laughed the idea to scorn.

The days and weeks passed on, Lewis became more used to a life of luxury, to costly surroundings; he felt he could not turn his back upon Bankside and begin a married life perhaps in cheap apartments in a London suburb. He might earn a few pounds now and again by lecturing, but not enough to support a wife, while as to making his living as a doctor that was impossible.

He had told Mrs. Rivers frankly he had no English diploma; he might have gone further with truth and said he had no diploma at all. He had never walked the hospitals, he had never taken his degree.

Possessed from early youth of the talents and gifts which make a successful hypnotist, he had studied such branches of medicine as seemed to further his favourite studies.

Mrs. Rivers' ailments being purely imaginary, and the widow believing implicitly in him, he was able to persuade her she was better under his care, but as to curing anyone really ill he could not have attempted it.

When he first came to Bankside he had meant to captivate Meta, lest her eyes should be sharp enough to detect his imposture, but the girl showed her dislike so openly, he had to despair of winning her confidence, and as he soon found that Mrs. Rivers disliked his having any but the most formal intercourse with her daughter he accepted Meta's snubs and left her alone.

Once more he left Bankside with a view to try and settle the conflict raging at his heart. This time he was only away two nights, and was recalled by a telegram saying his patroness was dying.

He rushed back to find—as he had expected—her danger purely imaginary. She began to mend as soon as he entered her boudoir, and her first conscious words were,—

"You must never leave me again."

She raised his salary. She placed a man servant at his special orders, and reserved a horse for his exclusive use. She made no secret of the fascination he exercised over her; only those around her had so long been used to her constant panics about her health that they ascribed her present mania as regard for the doctor she believed in rather than attachment for the man himself.

Lewis Bertram fought his battle during those long summer days, and it went hard with him, for he was not all bad, at least not then. But the need for sudden action came more quickly than he expected. At last he had to make his choice suddenly without an hour's warning between love and money, honour and dishonour; he chose the last, gold with dishonour. He acted a part as cruel and treacherous as could be played by mortal man, but he gained his end: the position of Mrs. Rivers' husband and the handing of her fortune.

Meta believed that the engagement took place after the quarrel between Lord Fane and Dr. Bertram, but she was mistaken. The words which bound Mrs. Rivers to a man twenty years her junior were really spoken a few days earlier.

Dr. Bertram obtained the marriage licence without the smallest difficulty. The affair took him perhaps ten minutes, though he had assured his fiancée the errand would entail his sleeping in London. His business accomplished he crossed London Bridge and took a tramway to a humble part of London Mrs. Rivers had never even heard of, and which seemed far too unfashionable for a man of his particular tastes.

Very near the river, and yet beyond the view of it or the noise of the busy traffic, stood the street he sought. Quiet and almost forgotten, the houses with quaint outside shutters, the lower windows which, there being no front court, the passer-by could touch, being mostly shaded by wire blinds. Dr. Bertram knocked at the third door, and a woman opened it quickly, her thin, haggard face brightening as she recognized him, though her words were expressive of fear rather than joy.

"Is it safe?" she asked, in an anxious voice.

"Because, dear, there have been a heap of people here lately."

"It's perfectly safe, Maggie. I have given up guaranteeing to tell people their fortune for two-and-six. I'm a gentleman now, and have done with all that sort of thing."

"I'm glad of it," and she led the way into a front parlour, where piles of clean clothes testified to her calling. You are too clever for that sort of thing, Lewis."

"Sit down a bit, Maggie," he said, kindly. "I have a lot to say, and what I've brought you will make up for the waste of a few minutes."

He pressed two sovereigns into her thin hand. It was little enough for Bartram to spare, but to the poor laundress it seemed a fortune. At first she almost hesitated to take so much, lest he could not spare it but he soon reassured her.

"You were always open-handed," she said, admiringly, "when you had anything to give."

"And I shall have plenty in future," he said, cheerfully. "I'm going to marry a rich woman, Maggie, and depend upon it you shall have your share."

Looking more intently at the pair you gradually perceived a resemblance between them. Mrs. Rivers' handsome fascinating doctor had more than one trait of resemblance to the humble laundress. As a fact they were brother and sister, and their real story was almost as romantic as any that Lewis could invent for himself.

Lewis and Margaret were the offspring of an Englishman who had gone out to the West Indies and married a half-caste. There were ten years between their children, and Nature with one of her strange freaks had so ordered it that while the girl would have been detected anywhere as "having coloured blood," the boy had so little of his mother's nativity that no one ever dreamed he was not a European. Many people at Hillington thought Dr. Bartram foreign-looking, and fancied he might have had an Italian ancestor, but no one ever suspected that his mother had been a half-caste, and his grandmother a full-coloured negress. And that difference of colour caused a wonderful difference in the lives of the brother and sister. Their father died when Maggie was twenty-two, intestate, and some flaw in the legality of his marriage, enabled his family to seize on all his property and cast his children adrift. Maggie married a man in a humble way, a small green-grocer, to be exact, Lewis was "adopted" by a friend of the dead father and speedily taken aboard.

But the guardian did not live to complete the charge he had undertaken, he died while young Lewis was yet in his teens; the lad drifted back to England, sought out his sister, and never wholly lost sight of her again.

Margaret Smith and her husband never guessed all the secrets of his life, or how when often face to face with poverty he managed to preserve the appearance of a gentleman.

Smith died young, and then Lewis took to confiding more in his sister, not all his secrets by any means, but he would often have letters sent to her house, and she knew perfectly that he received many fees for pretending to send people a chart of their future life.

Mrs. Smith had several delicate children still at home, and no doubt Lewis's gifts were welcome to her; she had besides an odd adoring sort of affection for the brother who was the sole remaining link with her earlier years.

She would never hear a word against Lewis; if in other days her husband had ventured to blame any of his actions she always retorted the lad was meant to be a gentleman, and only their father forgetting to make a will had defrauded him of his rights.

According to Mrs. Smith, because two unjust uncles had robbed her brother of a fortune the said brother was quite justified in getting as much as possible out of other people, by fair means or foul.

"There's a matter I want you to manage for me, Maggie," began Dr. Bartram, when he had taken a glass of ale and a crust of bread and cheese with his sister; Mrs. Smith called it "dinner," but it was very different from the repast known by that name at Bankside.

"You don't want me to go to her," said the woman, anxiously, with a little stress on the last word; "you know, Lewis, I saw her once. I was in the railway station that day last February, and I saw her on your arm looking so proud and happy. I thought then she was the prettiest creature I had ever seen, and I don't think I could bear to tell her you were going to marry somebody else."

"You need not trouble about her," returned Dr. Bartram, "she has thrown me over, will never see or speak to me again. I am quite free to bestow my hand upon my wealthy widow, so be reasonable, there's a good creature."

"I am ready," replied Maggie, quickly. "I'd go through fire and water for you, Lewis."

"I want you to copy out this letter; ask no questions for I can tell you nothing. It must be in a woman's handwriting, and there's not a living soul I can trust except yourself."

"I'll do it right enough," said Mrs. Smith, "though I am not much of a scholar. It reads very mysterious, Lewis. I suppose it is one of the 'fortunes' you used to send out for half-a-crown!"

"It's nothing of the sort; be as quick as you can. I've another job of the same sort ready for you."

"Well," said Mrs. Smith, as she dotted her last 'i' with great satisfaction, "you might have let the merest stranger out of the street copy this for all it tells them."

"5, Chades Street,

"Ashley Green.

"If you feel any interest in the tragedy which has lately taken place in our midst, be assured that the murderer is still near you. You can have his name for a consideration sent to the above address.

"ONE WHO KNOWS."

"What next?" demanded Mrs. Smith, as she directed the letter in her painfully spider-like straggling hand, to—

"JAMES CARSTON, Esq.,

"Hillington Hall, Essex."

"On second thoughts, I'll see to the other matter myself," he replied, gravely. "I can work a typewriter, and that tells no tales. Well, Maggie, I must be off; remember, old girl, I can always find you a sovereign if you're hard up."

She clung to him and kissed him fondly. Lewis Bartram was not a good man, but he possessed a wondrous gift for winning women's love. His sister was devoted to him, and he had never failed to gain a heart when he had really set his mind on making it his own.

The man was a wonderful compound of fascination and heartlessness. More than one wrecked life lay at his door. He was perfectly reckless in his conduct so that he did the best for himself, and yet through this low, sensual nature there flashed at times such gleams of tenderness as enabled one to understand the wonderful power he exercised on the opposite sex.

Lewis Bartram knew his London well, and soon discovered a place where, for a modest fee he secured the use of a typewriter for half an hour.

He was an expert typist, and yet it took the whole of that time to complete his letter, and when finished he was far from satisfied.

"That must do," he muttered to himself. "I'll post it at the General Post Office, that will leave no clue."

(To be continued.)

FLATULENCE, or wind, is a very common ailment, often allayed by a simple remedy. PAGE WOODCOCK'S WIND PILLS are of the greatest benefit in this form of indigestion; it is an old and well-tried medicine, and sufferers from flatulence should never be without a box of these pills in the house. The cost is 1s. 1½d. in the smallest size, and all chemists keep them.

THE DOCTOR'S SECRET.

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CHAPTER XIV.

DOCTOR FORBES watched Mrs. LeClerc's face keenly as he told his story. He knew that her greatest hobby was patrician blood. It was her dearest joy to tell him the story of her ancestors—how they dated back to kings.

He saw her set her lips hard together when he reached that part of his story that his father was an ordinary house carpenter, and his mother toiled at whatever work came to her hands after he died; but her smile beamed upon him just as sweetly, and he knew then that she was determined to hold the fort as far as he was concerned.

But he was a little surprised when she turned round the next moment, and said—

"I am so glad to learn that you are a self-made man, Doctor Forbes. We have so few of them that they are an honour to the community. I always thought that there was something extremely noble about you."

He bowed. A slight smile curved the corners of his mobile lips. He knew quite as well as she did that if he had not been the possessor of a million that she would have held a very different opinion of him.

He liked her none the better for her hypocrisy.

Although he watched her keenly, he could not see any change in her manner towards him. She was more gracious than ever, and again he told himself that she was more amiable than he had supposed.

"The loss of your mother leaves you all alone in the world," she said, in a sympathetic tone of voice.

He bowed.

"Let me be a mother to you until you get a mother-in-law," she said, archly. "Do you agree?"

"Most heartily," said Gordon Forbes, extending his hand.

When she went to her own room she talked over the matter with her daughter.

"It is a great pity that he is not of patrician blood," declared Mrs. LeClerc. "Still, we cannot help it. We are French, my dear, and pride ourselves upon our aristocratic lineage; while this is an upstart. He is very handsome, and has a fine practice, and we need his million so much. He insists upon going back to the hospital to-morrow."

"We must manage to keep him here a little while longer," returned Grace, quickly.

"He has made up his mind to go, and to attempt to persuade him to do otherwise would not be judicious on our part. I think that we have bridged over the little difference between you two."

"You forget the girl Mona Tempest, whom he took out driving at Christmas."

"Pshaw! A man like he is will not think of her long. Out of sight, out of mind."

Grace was not so sure of that. In his delirium he had mentioned the girl over and over again.

"He is changed, mamma," she went on. "There is a subtle something about him which makes him very different from what he used to be."

"Sickness has caused that," declared her mother. "A man on a sick bed does not feel like laughing and joking. You are unreasonable, Grace."

"Do not count upon getting Doctor Forbes, mamma," said Miss LeClerc, with a shrug of her shoulders.

"As a person thinketh, so it is. Any young girl can win the heart of any man she likes, if she sets about it deliberately—lays her plan, and then systematically executes it."

"You know better, mamma," declared Miss LeClerc. "There is a power higher and stronger than a woman's will that rules and regulates these things. You have heard of the old saying, mamma,—

"There is a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them as we will."

"If you think you can sit here in this room,

and fold your hands, and have someone come here and ask you to marry him, you are mistaken," said Mrs. LeClercq.

"I believe that fate sends the one to you whom you are intended to marry," said Grace, stoutly. "I believe if I were out in the Arctic regions, a native of that bleak domain, whoever I was to get would be sent out there on some expedition."

"I cannot shake these strange notions of yours," said Mrs. LeClercq, frowning angrily, "and they annoy me."

"I am very sorry, mamma," returned Grace, "but my knowledge comes from practical experience. I have set my will upon too many people, and lost them, to have much faith in what you call 'will-power.' I am afraid that he is too deeply in love with Mona Tempest to think of anyone else. I can only try; but do not abuse me, mamma, if I am unsuccessful."

When Doctor Forbes parted from them, soon after, was it Grace's fancy only, or did he hold her hand a moment longer than was absolutely necessary? Her heart throbbed, and a sigh of unutterable relief broke from her lips.

"I was foolish to mistrust my powers after all, I see. He has promised to call again within two days, and I feel reasonably sure that, being thrown in constant contact with each other, the old interest must awaken in his heart."

He had not said much about her brother. Woman-like, she had a shrewd suspicion that perhaps all was not as it should be between them, and it occurred to her that she had not seen much of Gus the last few days, and he had been crosser than ever of late. When she had asked him what was the matter he had snapped her up most unmercifully.

"By the way, Gus," she had said, "a friend of mine saw you with Miss Smithson lately. May I ask if she is the next sweetheart upon your programme?"

With an imprecation the young man turned upon her.

"Mind your own business," he said, huskily, "and I'll attend to mine."

As soon as he was quiet of hearing her mother turned to her angrily, saying—

"Your brother will win Maria Smithson if he can. He has lost one heiress; he does not propose to lose the next one that crosses his path."

Grace laughed long and merrily.

"The idea of any man attempting to marry Miss Smithson is so very funny, mamma," she said. "I could understand a poor young man jumping at the golden bait, but a rich young man like Gus, who ought to be able to win any girl—well, well, it seems altogether too preposterous."

Mr. and Mrs. LeClercq looked at each other; both felt glad that their idolised daughter did not know the truth as to how dangerously near they were to bankruptcy and ruin.

When Augustus LeClercq had gone to the workhouse upon that memorable Christmas Day he knew quite well that he should find the object of his search there ministering to the paupers.

Visitors were not turned away even on that day. They were made very welcome there, especially when they brought liberal donations.

It was not a difficult matter to find an opportunity to have a little chat with Miss Smithson, and it never occurred to her that this handsome young man had come there that day with the purpose of having a chat with her, and of making a good impression.

He must indeed be a very kind-hearted man, she thought, to be thinking of the poor on this particular day, instead of enjoying himself, as many another young man in his circle would be doing—dining and wining with the gaudy butterflies of fashion; and presently she told him so.

His reply was quite a master-piece of diplomacy.

"I have seen too much of life to waste one thought upon such creatures, Miss Smithson, I assure you."

"How sensible he is!" thought Miss Smithson.

"The greatest pleasure I have found is in

making others happy. Could there be a greater happiness than in administering to the wants of those unfortunate creatures, and at such a time as this?"

"I heartily agree with you," she answered. "You have voiced my sentiments precisely;" and the thought occurred to her what a noble heart this young man had.

He escorted her home, declaring it was not out of his way, as he had to pass there.

Augustus LeClercq possessed the power of fascinating women. He exerted himself to please Maria Smithson as he had never tried to please any woman before.

Sensible young women of the Smithson type were not much in his line. He liked gay rollicking young girls who had a spice of fun about them.

He left her at her door with the gravest of bows, begging permission to accompany her on some of her rounds of charity, that he might better understand and sympathise with the sorrows of the poor.

Miss Smithson graciously accorded him the privilege, and during the week that followed Gus was her companion every afternoon.

It made him fairly hold his breath to see the amount of money she was giving the poor—a whole fortune, he thought.

He made up his mind to marry her as soon as possible, though he had never seen a woman whom he more disliked.

CHAPTER XV.

AUGUSTUS LeClercq laid his plans with consummate skill. The following afternoon, after he had come to this conclusion, he presented himself early at Miss Smithson's home.

What a plain little home it was for the abode of a woman possessed of thousands. He looked around him contemptuously, thinking how he would change all this when he got possession of the Smithson fortune.

He did not have long to wait, for Miss Smithson did not devote much time to making her toilet. A moment after his card was sent up she made her appearance—a slim, pale creature dressed in brown.

"You are early to-day, Mr. LeClercq," she said. "I was not expecting you quite so soon. I did not order the coachman to be at the door until half an hour from now. I will see that he is hurried up."

"By no means," exclaimed the young man, hurriedly. "Do not send for him, I beg of you. It will give us the opportunity of having a quiet little chat before he comes. Let me beg that you be seated, Miss Smithson."

She sat down good-naturedly. To her surprise, handsome Mr. LeClercq took a seat near her.

"I quite forgot to bring down a list of the good work accomplished last week," she said.

"Time will speed quickly by in looking it over."

"Do not go for it," he said. "Will you pardon me if I say I would rather sit here and talk to you? To be honest with you, I must tell you that I have something to say to you. Will you listen to me?"

"Certainly," she said. "With the greatest of interest."

It never occurred to her that he was about to make a proposal of marriage to her, he was so coolly matter-of-fact. She quite believed that he was about to interest her in some charitable scheme.

"Miss Smithson," he began, "I have been in your society but a few short days, yet in that time the whole course of my life seems to have suddenly changed. I have experienced a happiness so great that to me it is almost pain."

"You mean the good work you have just commenced?" said Miss Smithson, little dreaming of what he meant.

"It is a good work, I admit, but not the kind you refer to. The good work is—falling desperately in love. There! the whole secret is out."

"Well, I declare!" said Maria Smithson, good-naturedly. "I congratulate you, I am sure, Mr. LeClercq."

Even as she uttered the words she wondered why he should make a confidant of her. Perhaps some little difficulty had risen between him and his lady-love, and he wished to ask advice. She knew nothing of love or lovers, yet if she could help this young gentleman in his dilemma she would be only too pleased to do so, she told herself.

"Are you surprised, Miss Smithson?" he said, drawing near and taking the little white hand that lay idly in her lap.

"No," she said, thoughtfully. "It seems to be the fate of most people to fall in love. I am not surprised."

"You will be surprised when you learn who it is that has so enamoured me. But please do not be angry with me, I beg of you."

She looked up at him quickly.

"Is it with one of the poor young girls whom we met last week?" she asked.

He bit his lip to keep from laughing aloud.

"No," he answered. "Can you not guess, Miss Smithson—Maria?"

She looked up at him. The words, the tone, needed no interpreting.

"Surely, Maria, you can see, you must have seen, what everyone else has noticed, that I love you madly—ay, adore you! I was happy until I met you; now I am the most miserable of men—hoping, doubting."

"Oh, Miss Smithson, do not be angry with me. Do not chide me for what has been the sweetest dream of my life; this bright, roseate glow which has changed earth into heaven for me."

"I love you with all my heart. Can you not care for me a little in return? Say that you will be mine, and I will be the happiest man the whole world holds."

"Do not turn away from me, Maria. If you refuse me, all the happiness of life will be over with me. I will not care what becomes of me. If I am refused, I will end it all by shooting myself at your feet."

As he uttered the words he made a feint of putting his hand into his breast-pocket, as though he were reaching for a revolver to carry out his threat.

"Oh, Mr. LeClercq, please do not do that!" she cried out in great alarm.

"Do you consent, then?" he asked, in a very dramatic voice.

"I—I—do not know, Mr. LeClercq," she stammered. "Give me time to think. I—I—am unsettled. You have quite terrified me."

"You need take no time to think," he answered. "Surely you must have been attracted to me, as I have been to you. I know that it is very sudden. Perhaps it would be best to give you a little time to think the matter over. You cannot fail to see how greatly my future life depends upon your answer."

"I—I—must be quite frank with you," said poor Miss Smithson, blushing a painful red. "I thought of you only as a co-worker interested in aiding the poor and needy," she added, earnestly.

Again he could have laughed aloud; but he restrained the grim mirth that rose to his lips.

He told himself one could easily see that no man had ever before made love to Maria Smithson. Still, he did not wonder at that. Few men would have had the temerity to do so.

"I see that I have agitated you, my dear Miss Smithson," he said, in the sweetest and most dulcet of voices. "Pray pardon me if I seem too precipitate. Think it over, and I will call for your answer to-morrow. Let it be a favourable one, I beg of you."

Before she could find time to answer him, he had bowed himself out of her presence.

"Marriage with her will be a pretty hard pill to swallow," he said to himself. "But her fortune is so large that a man would be little short of an idiot to hesitate."

He had no fear whatever but that she would accept him; offers of marriage did not come her way every day.

He felt that she was watching him from behind the curtained window, and he turned the first corner, that he might enjoy a hearty laugh over the expression that had crossed her face

when he said that he adored her, and could not live without her, and all that kind of nonsense such as women expect an offer of marriage interlarded with.

Contrary to his expectation, Maria Smithson had not gone to the window. She stood quite still where he had left her, staring straight before her.

Her eyes encountered her face in the mirror opposite.

"Am I mad or dreaming?" she muttered, "or are my senses playing me false? His loves me—me, whom nobody ever cared for before! What can he see in me to admire?"

She crept up to the long mirror and looked breathlessly at the face reflected there.

Ah! what a poor, plain little face it was, furrowed by wrinkles which should not have appeared upon a face so young, and making her appear prematurely old.

"What can he possibly see in me to admire?" she asked herself over and over again, almost whispering the words in her intense eagerness.

The life-history of Maria Smithson was a peculiar one. She was the only child of parents who had been comparatively poor all their lives, and all her childhood and girlhood Maria spent in homely toil.

She had been a very modest, retiring girl, and somehow love and lovers had passed her by. Youth slipped by unnoticed. She cared for the old folks, supporting them by her needle, making no complaint.

Then a strange thing happened. The death of some relative of whom the Smithsons had never heard, left them, as next of kin, a large fortune.

The excitement of it killed the infirm old father, who had never known what it was to lay his hand upon an extra five-pound note that he had saved.

The old mother soon followed, and Maria was left alone, the sole possessor of a fortune that would have turned the head of most women. But Maria was too sensible for that.

She still remained in the little wooden house in its unpretentious street, the only difference in her lonely life being the engaging of two of her humblest neighbours as servants.

She gave up her work, and turned her attention to the poor, attending to their wants, while few of them ever knew from whose hand the bounty came which they received. None of them knew Miss Smithson as a great heiress, but simply as the "Angel of the Poor."

So she led her quiet life, which had only one object in it from day to day. It was an eventful hour for her when Augustus LeClerc crossed her path. It almost seemed as if she were dreaming.

The memory of his words seemed to leave room for no other sound in her ears. It never occurred to her to distrust him. She never believed a man would ask a woman to marry him if he did not love her.

CHAPTER XVI.

Long and steadily Maria Smithson gazed into the face reflected in the mirror to see what there was about it which handsome Mr. LeClerc could admire.

She had not paid much attention to that face before. Now she watched it with breathless interest. Ah, how colourless and plain it was!

She saw all her shortcomings, for she was a critical judge; but she did not see the beauty of the soul lying beyond, which was so truthfully mirrored in those earnest blue eyes and in the sweet, tender smile which was always about the tender mouth.

She turned slowly and touched the bell.

The quiet, tidy serving woman who answered the summons was startled at the expression of Miss Smithson's countenance.

"Tell John to take the horses back to the stable, Mary," she said. "I shall not use them to-day."

Mary gave the order, making no comment to the coachman; but she could not help wondering what in the world could have happened to cause Miss Maria to forego her fixed habit of

making her daily round among the poor and needy. No matter how terrible the weather might be—winter's snow or summer's rain—it never before deterred her.

"So many watch for my coming," she would say, when remonstrated with for exposing herself to the fury of the inclement weather. "I should not like to disappoint those poor unfortunates to whom my coming may bring a little ray of sunshine."

Miss Smithson walked slowly to her room. Before the fire was stretched Nero, the huge mastiff, his mistress's only pet.

The dog loved her dearly—ay, with a love that was almost human. He sprang quickly to his feet, and frisked and played about her, wagging his tail and attesting in every canine way his joy at beholding her.

"Lie down on the rug again, Nero," she said. "I want to talk to you. I have no one else I dare tell, and—sometimes it almost seems to me that you can understand what I say to you."

The dog obeyed, stretching himself at full length on the rug before the glowing grate, and looking up wistfully and expectantly into the face bending over him.

"Nero," she whispered, softly, "there is some one in this great, wide, dreary world who loves me besides you—someone who has asked me to marry him."

The dog sprang up to a sitting posture, still looking at her intently; but he did not wag his tail or attempt to lick the thin, white hand that patted his shaggy head.

"You seem to understand, and you are not pleased, Nero," she murmured, with a half smile. "You are a jealous animal."

He did not move, but the intent look never left the eyes regarding her face so closely.

"The trouble is, Nero," she went on, "I—I do not know what to do. I never realised what a really lonely life I led with the two servants and you, until he pointed it out to me. Now it has dawned upon me."

"It is a lonely life, making other people happy without having someone in the world who thinks it a pleasure to make you happy. After all, nothing could be more lonely than to have nothing but a dog to talk to, and—and—to care for."

"Of course you are faithful to me. You love me, and all that; but, as he says, the love of an animal does not satisfy the human heart. Human beings crave companionship—someone to talk to, someone to love, who will love them in return."

"You see, Nero, you cannot fill all these requirements. Ah, Nero, he is so handsome, so good, so noble, such a good Christian—don't you wonder how he could ever love poor plain me?"

"I have never thought much about love or marriage," she went on, musingly. "I thought there was no one for me. Surely this man's life has been so bright, so joyous, so full of sunshine, it would not be right to link it with a sombre existence like mine. He would be a better mate for some merry-hearted young girl who has known only luxury and happiness!—don't you think so, Nero?"

And she looked into the dog's face as though she expected an answer, as if her whole life depended upon it.

She had been different from other girls. Even in her early youth she had not longed for a lover, as most young girls do. She had been too busy to give love a thought.

She had been too noble to envy other girls, and thus her girlhood had glided by. She had been satisfied with her life, and, like many another woman, she would have led a happy enough existence of it to the end had not a lover crossed her path and brought into her life a new element.

She did not sleep much that night; her rest was disturbed by fitful dreams. One of them impressed her more than all the rest.

She thought she was crossing a barren moor covered with snow—one large, trackless field, as far as the eye could reach, save one spot, a frozen lake or pond which stretched afar off.

But looking across it, she thought she could discern through the gathering gloom the form of a

man; and as her eyes became accustomed to the semi-light she saw the man was her lover—Augustus LeClerc.

He beckoned her to cross to him. She hesitated a moment, for the way was long and dark and slippery; but he smiled so reassuringly that, though her heart was faint, she stepped bravely across the frozen lake.

She had scarcely taken the first step ere she noticed that there were signs—placards up in every direction—bearing the words,—

"Beware! Take care!"

But it was too late; she had taken the fatal step. She realised that she must push onward until she reached the other side, even though death lay at the very end of her journey.

The dream troubled Maria Smithson; she could not tell why. She wondered if it had any special meaning. She was an early riser, and was up with the sun the next morning, as was her usual custom.

But her mind was ill at ease. For the very first time in her life she did not like to note time fit by so quickly.

He had said that he would call the following day. The hour he had set was almost at hand. How should she answer him? What should she say?

When she heard his well-known ring at the bell her heart throbbled so violently that she feared it would break.

How was she to see him again? How would she answer him, this lover who had come so strangely into her lonely life?

"Mr. LeClerc," announced the servant, a moment later.

"Say that I will be down at once," said Miss Smithson, in a voice which she was sure must sound strange and unnatural even to the maid's ears.

She walked quickly over to the glass, and again, with pitiful eagerness, watched the face reflected there. She had made her toilet with the greatest care. But ah, how plain she looked!

Miss Smithson did something which she had never done before—put a crimson rose in the bodice of her dress. She had worn it down to breakfast, so that the servants might not comment when her visitor was announced.

They did wonder at it, however, and guessed her secret at once; Miss Smithson was in love with the handsome gentleman who called each day to accompany her in her rounds of visiting the poor.

They shook their heads among themselves. That handsome young man could not care for Miss Smithson, they believed. He was certainly two or three years her junior—the worst possible objection. Besides, he was quite handsome and stylish. He was certainly after her for her money, they decided; so that marriage with him would be the worst thing that could possibly happen to her.

Unmindful of the gossip in the lower hall, Miss Smithson descended to the little parlour where Augustus LeClerc awaited her, resplendent with a *bouillon-nière* in the lapel of his coat.

He rose quickly as she entered, and ere she was aware of his intentions he had clasped her in his arms.

"Maria," he whispered, "I cannot wait another instant to know my fate. Suspense is killing me. Is it 'yes' or 'no'?"

"Really, Mr. LeClerc," she panted, seeking to free herself from his grasp, "I—I have had such a short time to think, that I have not given the matter proper consideration."

"Oh, my darling, do not say that! I would have wagered my very life that you would not say me nay. You know well that I cannot live without you."

Then followed a flood of eloquence so wonderful that it almost took away her senses. His did not give her an opportunity to speak.

"Take me on trial for a little while, Maria," he pleaded. "You surely can find no fault with that. If at the end of a month or two you find I do not suit you, then, even though it breaks my heart, the sweet bond shall be broken."

She never knew how it was, what answer she had made, or whether she had made any; but

her lover was clasping her in his arms, crying out that he was the happiest man in the whole wide world.

She had consented to be his wife.

CHAPTER XVII.

It was indeed a strange position for Maria Smithson to find herself placed in.

She could not get in a word edgewise, her lover talked so quickly.

"Do you know, my darling," he went on, in the same breath in which he had declared that she had accepted him, "that I have dared to do something for which you must not scold me! I—I felt so sure that you and Heaven would be kind to me, in not refusing my prayer, that I—I told my mother about it, declaring that our betrothal was an assured fact. She was so anxious to see the dear girl whom I loved so well that she insisted upon driving down here with me, to clasp you in her arms, and to whisper, 'Heaven bless you, my darling daughter that is to be.' May she come in, Maria!"

Poor Miss Smithson was too bewildered for words. Her brain seemed to swim. Before she could frame a reply, a tall, elegant, fashionably dressed woman, clad in velvet and priceless Russian sables, swept into the room, and the next instant her arms were about her.

"Dear Maria," she whispered, "my heart goes out to you at sight. I am sure I shall love you for my dear son's sake. He has talked of you so much that I feel as if I had known and loved you a lifetime. It will be my greatest pleasure to know that you will have a happy life during all the years to come—that Gus will be your abject slave, he is so fond of you. He has never loved anyone before. You will have his whole heart, my dear; you may depend upon that. He will do everything to make you happy. I own frankly to you that I could not be better pleased than I am at his selection of a wife."

Maria did not know what to say.

Both mother and son seemed to take it for granted that the matter was settled. They both appeared to think so much of her, and to be so delighted over the matter, that she could not find the heart to tell them it was not settled. She who had had such a lonely life found herself transplanted into a different world, as it were.

At last the interview came to an end.

Mrs. LeClerc took her leave, Gus accompanying her, both promising that they would see her again soon, and Mrs. LeClerc declaring that Gus's sister would call upon her later in the day, and that the afternoon following Gus would bring her to their house to dine, that his father might have an opportunity of meeting his future daughter-in-law.

To Maria it seemed as though she were in a dream. She was betrothed to Mr. Augustus LeClerc without any volition of her own. He had even slipped a slender ring upon her finger.

She had scarcely recovered from her dazed feeling of wonder ere Miss LeClerc called. Like her mother, she was very effusive, and Maria was completely deceived by her apparent great liking for her.

All at once she seemed to have entered a different world. She had never had a sister; but had longed for one with all her soul. This lovely young girl's apparent devotion went straight to her heart.

Betrothed! Ah, how strange it seemed to her. If it were not for the dainty, glittering ring upon her finger, and the fragrance from the beautiful bouquet of roses Gus's sister had brought her, she would have believed it all a dream.

She felt that she must soon break it to her housekeeper, though she shrank from the task, little dreaming that the servants had been commenting upon matters as they had witnessed them for the last fortnight.

She took the first occasion that presented itself, Mrs. Green, the housekeeper, having come to her room to consult her about some household matters.

"The printer was here for your plate this morning, Miss Smithson," she said. "He told

me that the last time he saw you you gave him an order for a thousand cards. I was surprised at the large order. I felt that he had surely made some mistake, and I thought I would consult you before I gave him the plate to print them from. I know you could not use that many cards in two years' time."

It was quite pitiful to see how Miss Smithson blushed.

"You are quite right, Mrs. Green," she answered. "The amount I ordered was one hundred cards. I might not be Miss Smithson long enough to use a thousand cards."

There was an awkward silence. Then she went on, with the unnatural flush still in her face.

"What would you think if I were to tell you that I had thoughts of marrying, Mrs. Green?"

"I should hope it was only a thought, miss," replied the woman, bluntly.

"Why do you say that?" said Miss Smithson, with a start, her face turning more scarlet than before.

"I should not like to see you tricked into marrying," said the woman, still more bluntly.

"I am surprised to hear you speak in that manner. Why do you use the word trick?"

"Because that's how most women find themselves, unless they get the right kind of a man."

"What is your idea of the right kind of a man, as you call it?" asked Maria.

"A man who marries a woman because he loves her—not for the sake of her money."

"You do not think a man would marry me for that reason, do you?" asked Maria, turning very pale.

"Heaven forbid, miss!" was the non-committal answer of the woman. "You are too good to have anything like that happen to you."

"If a man were already rich, it would not be supposed that he would choose a lady for money," said Miss Smithson.

"You cannot always tell whether they are rich or not," said Mrs. Green. "Sometimes one finds out about them when it's too late."

"I have something to tell you which perhaps will be a surprise to you," said Miss Smithson, softly.

"So I feared, miss," was the brief reply.

"Why do you say feared, Mrs. Green?"

She hesitated, but the answer came; and again she repeated her words.

"You ask for a reply," said Mrs. Green, slowly, "but if I answered you frankly you would be offended, for I should have to tell the truth."

"I have known you all my life, Mrs. Green," said Miss Smithson, "and I promise you that I shall not be offended at what you may say."

Thus reassured, the woman said,—

"To begin with, Mr. LeClerc—for I suppose he is the man you mean—has done his wooing in altogether too much of a hurry to be really in love. He is not the sort of man who would make you happy, and then—oh, Miss Smithson, shall I go on? Perhaps you might never forgive me for what I am about to say."

"Yes, go on," said Miss Smithson, with painful eagerness. "I promise you I shall not be angry."

For a moment Mrs. Green hesitated.

"It is best that I should speak," she thought.

"Well!" said Miss Smithson.

"The truth is," responded the housekeeper, slowly, "you look considerably older than Mr. LeClerc, miss."

Miss Smithson sat quite still; a deathly whiteness stole over her.

"I—I have been wondering about that," she said, in a voice that faltered, despite her efforts at self control. "You have known me so long and seen me so much that I may appear older to you than to most people. But even if I were a little older than he, do you suppose that would make any difference, Mrs. Green?"

"All the difference in the world," said the housekeeper, bluntly. "It is almost impossible for a woman to get along with a man who is younger than herself. Love is never so strong between them; but if it were it would soon cool

after marriage; for woman grows old quickly then, while a man stays as young as ever for ten years or more; and at the first appearance of grey hairs, crow's-foot, and wrinkles, he is ready to fly off with a younger and prettier girl."

"You are prejudiced because you made an unhappy marriage," laughed Maria Smithson.

"You see life through very dark glasses, I fear."

"I see life as it is, miss," said the elder woman, looking gravely at Miss Smithson.

For long hours after she had left the room Maria Smithson sat before the glowing grate, looking into the bright coals, lost in a confusion of thoughts.

Was she old? Why, her heart seemed very young; ay, as young as it had ever been.

Surely Gus LeClerc did not think her old.

She would try to forget the housekeeper's ominous words; but somehow they had burned like fire to the very depths of her soul.

(To be continued.)

It is said that yellow fever is being successfully treated in Brazil by a refrigerating process. The patient is placed in a box for three days, the temperature of which is only one or two degrees above the freezing point, the theory being that the bacilli of the disease cannot reproduce themselves except at a high temperature.

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how to keep healthy and avoid the anxieties so distress-
ing to all. Sent free, securely sealed, for one stamp, to
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FACETIA.

"**FREDERICK,**" said she, "don't let the baby
stand alone." "Why, she's old enough to learn
to walk." "Old enough to learn to walk! Why,
she hasn't even learned to ride a bicycle yet."

GERMAN FRIEND: "De picture you haf painted
is most beautiful; dere is only von word in the
English landkidge vich describes it—and I haf
vorgotten it."

ONE LITTLE GIRL IN THE STUMS: "Wot yer
say she died of?" The Other One: "Eatin' ice-
cream on the top of 'ot puddin'." The First
Mentioned: "Lor! what a jolly death!"

MOULDER: "I see some philosopher says that
the way to cure yourself of a love affair is to run
away. Do you believe it?" **CYNICUS:** "Cer-
tainly—if you run away with the girl."

BOBBY: "Papa, what is classical music?"
FOND PARENT: "Classical music, Bobby, is music
that you have never heard before, and never want
to hear again."

"No, Mr. Coolhand," she said kindly, "I am
sure I could never learn to love you." "Oh,
perhaps you could," rejoined Coolhand cheerfully.
"Never too old to learn, you know."

"What! You charge a shilling for carrying
my bag to the station! Why, I could have taken
a cab for that money." Boy: "Yes, of course;
a cab-driver can do it cheaper. He has a cab,
but I've got to carry it on foot!"

THAT was a triumphal appeal of an Irish lover
of antiquity who, in arguing the superiority of
the old architecture over the new, said: "Where
will you find any modern building that has lasted
so long as the ancient!"

"Why don't you take a vacation?" "Well,
that's a peculiar thing. If I don't ask for a
substitute they'll believe I have nothing to do,
and if I ask for one he'll find out that I have
nothing to do."

CHURCHYMAN (anxious to compliment the host
at a Sunday-school outing): "Now, can any dear
child tell me to what one person we are most
indebted for the great crowd of happy and
smiling faces that are gathered here to-day!"
Dear Child: "Adam."

MRS. JONES: "Isn't it just wonderful how
Mrs. Smith fought that burglar last night? He
got a terrible thrashing." Mr. Jones: "Yes.
But I understand it happened by mistake. She
thought it was Smith, for whom she had been
sitting up all night."

"Yes," said the new boarder, at the break-
fast-table, "for the past twelve months I have lived
on the simplest fare, taken regular exercise, gone
to bed and got up at the same time, and never
touched beer or spirituous liquors!" "And
what were you in for?" inquired the youngest
boarder.

THIS is a story of a young man's meek polite-
ness. Once, when leaving home, his father told
him, if he arrived safely at his destination, to
telegraph "Yes." This he did. His father, in
the meantime, had forgotten the arrangement,
and upon receiving the telegram wired back:
"Yes, what!" The young man answered: "Yes,
sir."

MISS GOODIE: "I think those South Sea
beathens are simply horrid." Old Lady: "Yes;
my nephew was a missionary among them, and
used to write me letters telling about them."
MISS GOODIE: "Oh, how perfectly interesting!
How did they serve him?" Old Lady (inno-
cently): "Roasted, I think; but it may have
been boiled. It was a long time ago, and my
information came second-hand."

A YOUNG lady of some nineteen summers en-
tered the bank one afternoon, and handing a
crossed cheque to the cashier, asked to have its
value in cash. "Miss," said he, "this cheque is
crossed, and the money can't be paid across the
counter." "Oh," answered the young lady, in
surprise; "then I'll come round to the other
side." And the clerk was just in time to pre-
vent by further explanation the embarrassing
visit of the fair one.

THE faculty of estimating a person's serious-
ness by the sound of his voice or the peculiarity
of the words he uses is highly developed in the
small boy. "Bertie, don't you hear your mother
calling you?" "Yes'm, but she don't want me
bad." "Yes, she does; she has called you seven
times." "I know; but she hasn't called 'Albert'
yet."

POLICE CONSTABLE 22: "Look here, young
man, you've been hanging about here for over
an hour. It's very suspicious. What are you up
to?" Young Mr. Dapper (who has been a
father just eleven days): "Oh nothing. You see
I'm waiting until there's no one in the chemist's
shop, so I can go in and buy a feeding-bottle."
Police-constable 22: "Here, give me the money
—I'll fetch one. You won't be so nervous next
time."

POETIC-LOOKING YOUNG MAN: "I've called
with this manuscript." Clever Comic Editor:
"Shove it in the waste paper basket, please. I'm
very busy just now, and haven't time to do it
myself." Poetic-Looking Young Man (throwing
the manuscript in the waste-paper basket):
"I've come from the— Theatre, and the manu-
script I have just thrown in the waste paper
basket is your comic drama, which the manager
begs me to return to you with thanks—many
thanks. He suggests you should sell it to an
undertaker to be read at a funeral." [Exit poetic-
looking individual, gently smiling.]

A LATE well-known member of the Scottish
Bar, when a youth, was somewhat of a dandy,
and somewhat short and sharp in his temper.
He was going to pay a visit in the country, and
was making a great fuss about the preparing and
putting up of his habiliments. His old aunt was
much annoyed at all this bustle, and stopped
him by the somewhat contemptuous question:
"Whaur's this your gawn, Robby, that ye mak
sle a grand ware about your classes?" The
young man lost his temper, and pettishly re-
plied, "I'm going to the devil." "Deed,
Robby, then," was the quiet answer, "ye need
na be as nice, he'll just tak ye as ye are."

NOR long since there stepped up to the book-
ing office of a provincial railway station a man
whose every word and action betokened a son of
the soil. After a cheery "Gude-mornin' to ye!"
he asked the clerk for a ticket to London. "You
will have a return, won't you?" inquired the
clerk. "Wot's that?" "Why, you'll want to
come back, won't you?" "Naw, that I shan't;
but ye'd better give me a return, all the same."
"But," expostulated the clerk, "if you don't
want to come back it's only a waste of money!"
"Look 'ere, young man!" replied the old fellow
in a tone of subdued confidence, "that's my
business. I sartainly shan't want ter come back;
but I shall jest as sartainly have to!"

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SOCIETY.

THE Queen's age has been exceeded by only one former occupant of the throne of England—George III., who was eighty-two years old when he died. The age of George II. was equal to that which Her Majesty has attained.

THE Emperor and Empress of Russia are attended in all their journeys by four Circassian domestics, who are gorgeously arrayed in long red coats profusely embroidered with gold, and wear high black caps. These are the Imperial travelling servants.

THE Empress of Russia has presented the Second Prussian Dragoon Guards, the regiment of which she is honorary colonel, with a splendid set of silver kettledrums. The Emperor has given new furs to the Paderbörner Hussars, and that regiment will in future be known by his name.

PRINCE FRANCIS JOSEPH OF BATTENBERG, younger brother of the late Prince Henry, has been staying at Balmoral, and it seems probable that an announcement of much interest will not be much longer delayed. The Queen has formed a very high opinion of Prince Francis Joseph, and Princess Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein is a very favourite granddaughter. The Prince is a good-looking man, if not so strikingly handsome as the late Princes—Alexander and Henry. He is captain in a Hessian regiment of infantry, and a colonel in the Bulgarian cavalry. His Highness has just celebrated his thirty-fifth birthday. He is a great favourite with his widowed sister-in-law, and Princess Henry is deeply attached to her niece, Princess Victoria.

PRINCESS HENRY OF BATTENBERG has discarded for the time being her idea of sending Prince Alexander to school with his cousin the Duke of Albany. The young Prince, who is very bright and intelligent and devoted to his mother, has been a great solace to her Royal Highness during her sorrow.

THE Emperor of Russia conferred the Order of St. Andrew upon the Duke of York during his stay at Balmoral, while the St. Catherine was given to the Duchess of York and to Princess Beatrice. The St. Andrew insignia include a star, which the Emperor nearly always presents in brilliants.

THE Russian Imperial train consists of eleven immense carriages, and its weight is upwards of four hundred and thirty tons. There is a corridor connection throughout, with a complete system of electric bells, and the electric light illuminates the train both inside and outside. The two kitchen carriages are in front, while the luggage-vans are at the back. The Emperor's two saloons are placed in the centre of the train. The drawing-room has furniture of walnutwood, upholstered in Pompadour blue and white, and the walls are hung with rose silk. The dining-room, which is hung with chamade cloth, and upholstered in russet leather, contains a well-stocked bookcase, and a large writing-table. The Emperor's bedroom is hung with salmon colour, while that of the Empress is sumptuously furnished in light blue satin. There are dressing-rooms and bath-rooms and a smoking-carriage, the whole train being a marvel of comfort and luxury. The Imperial train travels at the uniform rate of thirty-five miles an hour during the day, and twenty-two miles an hour from eleven at night until nine in the morning, this being the same arrangement as when the Queen takes a long journey. The carriages are so admirably constructed that jolts are unknown, the motion being almost imperceptible.

WHILE the Court is at Balmoral the Queen and the Royal party drive every fine afternoon to the Duntzig Shiel, where five o'clock tea is served. This is a lodge which the Queen built some years ago in the recesses of Balmochbuie Forest; it is surrounded by pines and firs, and is near to the beautiful Falls of Garbh Allt, which form the most picturesque cataract on Deeside. There are three falls, and the stream runs over a rocky bed, its banks being overhung by trees, principally pines and birches.

STATISTICS.

No fewer than 1,173 persons have been buried in Westminster Abbey.

TAKING it year in and year out, the coldest hour of each 24 is 5 o'clock in the morning.

THE ordinary speed of a house-fly is twenty-five feet a second; but when chased it often attains a speed of 160 feet a second.

BARCELONA is the centre of the manufacture of cigarette paper. Two houses alone produce 180,000 reams a year, valued at £12,000.

ENGLAND has one member of Parliament for every 10,290 electors, Ireland one for every 7,177, Scotland one for every 8,974, and Wales one for every 9,618.

GEMS.

EVERY age has its problem, by solving which humanity is helped forward.

A GOOD deed is never lost; he who sows courtesy reaps friendship, and he who plants kindness gathers love.

THE boy who has the wood to saw is ever ready to encourage any strivings after muscular development on the part of his fellows.

DO not think of your faults—still less of others' faults. In every person who comes near you look for what is good and strong; honour that, rejoice in it, and, as you can, try to imitate it, and your faults will drop off like dead leaves when autumn comes.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

BAKED MACKEREL.—Cut off the heads and tails of the fish, split and clean them; roll them in a mixture of salt, pepper and flour, and bake a good colour in hot lard or butter. Serve very hot with a mustard or a tartare sauce.

CREAM SODA.—Dissolve one pound of loaf sugar in a pint of water, add the juice and grated rind of a large lemon, set over fire to boil. Add the beaten whites of three eggs; stir, take from the fire and strain. Let cool and bottle. When ready to use put two table-spoonfuls in a glass of ice-water, and add a pinch of soda.

TOMATO JELLY SALAD.—Take eight good-sized tomatoes, remove skins, and stew gently ten minutes, with a slice of onion, six cloves, a sprinkling of pepper, and a quarter of a tea-spoonful of salt. Pass this through a sieve to remove seeds, etc. Stand it on back of stove and stir into it one-half box of gelatine dissolved in a small half a cupful of boiling water. Strain into cups wet in cold water, and set away to harden. There should be a pint and a half in all. Serve in slices on lettuce leaves, with mayonnaise dressing. This may be prepared with canned tomatoes also.

THE following recipe for biscuits made with LIMONA is so very simple and nice that everyone should try it: mix together $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Limona, 1 oz. butter, 2 ozs. castor sugar, 1 beaten egg, and a tea-spoonful of milk. Drop from the spoon on to a tin, and bake about 10 minutes in a brisk oven. The following steamed pudding will also be found excellent: stir 2 table-spoonfuls of Limona flour smoothly with a little cold milk, pour over a pint of boiling milk, and sweeten to taste; let it cool. Beat up 2 eggs and stir them in, with the grated rind of a lemon; turn into a greased mould, cover with buttered paper, and steam an hour. Serve with cold butter and sugar. The Limona is purchased from any grocer or stores, price 9d. a pound tin. It is manufactured at the Limons Food Works, Preston, Lancashire.

MISCELLANEOUS.

MOLES are expert swimmers. Their broad paws operate as paddles.

THE only fur-covered four-footed member of the animal kingdom which lays eggs like a fowl is the native beaver of Australia.

PRINCE AND PRINCESS CHARLES OF DENMARK will return to Appletton for the winter at the beginning of November.

TELEGRAPH wires will last for forty years near the seashore. In the manufacturing districts the same wires last only ten years, and sometimes less.

ATHENS, Greece, has never had a public library until the nucleus of one was formed some thirteen years ago by three women. The start was modest, and only one thousand books adorned the shelves.

IN Germany the bridal wreath is usually formed of myrtle branches, in Switzerland and Italy of white roses, in Spain of red roses and pinks, in the United States, France, and England, of orange blossoms.

A SHAWER of the South Pacific often grows to be thirty or forty inches in diameter, and 1,500 to 2,000 feet in length. It has no root in the proper sense, the nourishment being absorbed from the water.

THE whiskers of the walrus extend three or four inches out from the snout. They are quite stiff, and become stiffer with age. They are plucked separately and exported to China, where they are used as toothpicks.

THERE is one very good explanation of the fact that great cities almost invariably grow towards the west. As regards Europe, the prevailing winds are from the west and south-west, so that these portions of the towns are brighter, cleaner, and healthier than the eastern.

THE cattle, sheep, and swine in Denmark have to undergo a rigid veterinary examination both before and after they are slaughtered. Before meat can be removed from the slaughter-house it must be officially stamped as "first or second class food."

SOAP has been in use for 3,000 years, and is twice mentioned in the Bible. A few years ago a soap-boller's shop was discovered in Pompeii, having been buried beneath the terrible rain of ashes that fell upon that city 79 A.D. The soap found in the shop had not lost all its efficacy, although it had been buried 1,800 years.

THE Maldivian Islanders eat alone. Before a meal they retire to the most secluded spot they can find, and eat with drawn blinds or surrounded by a screen. The explanation of this precaution is more likely to be fear than modesty. In days gone by the savage no doubt concealed himself lest some man stronger than he should snatch the hard-earned food away.

ENGLAND can boast of more quaint customs and ceremonies that have been handed down from century to century than any other civilized nation. The sounding of the mayor's horn at Ripon is one of the most ancient customs in the kingdom. It formerly announced the setting of the watch, but it has now lapsed into the formality of three blasts given at nine o'clock every evening at the mayor's residence by his official horn-blower, and three more at the market cross.

CAMPOR is produced by several trees which differ materially in their habits, while other trees, closely related to them, do not produce the drug. Nearly all that is used in Europe or America is exported from China and Japan. A species of tree in Borneo produces camphor of a very high order, which sells for eighty times the price of the common article. It is nearly all used in China, where it is esteemed as an incense. One species of smokeless powder requires camphor in its formation; but it has never been used in sufficiently great quantities to affect the market price. The trees from which camphor is produced grow slowly. Man is their greatest enemy, and unless efforts are made to protect the trees now living and others are planted future generations will have little camphor.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

EDDIE.—Offer them to some dealer.
AMO.—It could be done by mutual agreement.
CURIOSITY.—We have not the names asked for.
BOTHERED.—It would involve legal proceedings.
SCOFFER.—Your friend must go to a chiropodist.
INQUIRER.—We have no information upon the subject.
BEAUTY.—They are natural, and cannot be cultivated.
FRANKIE.—The master is not bound in law to pay him.
TOM NODDY.—You had better communicate with the War Office.
GLASGOWMAN.—Glasgow is not a seaport, but a port on a tidal river.
UNCERTAINTY.—There is no certain rule by which one can be guided.
TOCTOPUS FOLLY.—Apply at one of the training ships on the Thames.
GAFFER.—The landlord must give the same notice to raise rent as to quit.
F. M. C.—Gandahar is about two hundred miles south-west of Cabul.
PRACTICAL JOKIST.—Silver is a legal tender to the value of forty shillings.
MONA.—It is a difficult matter. Time is the best and most effectual bleacher.
J. M. W.—We cannot help you. What you allude to is a patent preparation.
IN DESPAIR.—Look in the London Directory; addresses are never given.
JACKO.—We do not know. Any mineral oil dealer should be able to tell you.
HORATIO.—He must give you notice to quit, and also notice to increase the rent.
HELPER.—It is not in our province to recommend particular boarding-houses.
DAINTY LITTLE MAIDEN.—Your best course would be to make inquiry on the spot.
NICK.—If the person refuses to give his name and place of abode, not otherwise.
ADVENTURER.—The height of the great wheel at Earl's Court is three hundred feet.
W. F.—Any bookseller can obtain the specification for you for a few pence, if it is printed.
TROUBLED.—The only way is to inquire of the solicitors or the auctioneer concerned in the sale.
THE BEARDED LADY.—By pulling the hairs out repeatedly they will finally entirely disappear.
SAD AND LOWLY.—You would be received and kindly treated in any one of our large London hospitals.
INDIGNANT TENANT.—You cannot compel the landlord to repair the place, but you can give notice to leave.
WILLIE.—The only way to renew the colour of the coat is to give it to a dyer; the job is beyond your capacity.
FRANK.—The marriage is legal, but the man may be prosecuted for making a false declaration of age and consent.
TROUBLED FANNY.—We cannot advise unless we know more as to your health. It possibly arises from dyspepsia.
HEAD OF THE FAMILY.—The most prudent course would be to move out. Your goods are, however, protected by law.
IRENE.—If you live in the house you would rank as a domestic servant, and be entitled to give or require a month's notice.
ANNOYED SISTER.—Apply to the Agent-General in Melbourne, he would render her some assistance to come home again.
LONGSHORER OF BILLY.—The number of the population, though said to be about a hundred millions, is merely conjectural.
BASHFUL MAN.—Seek out someone acquainted with the party referred to, and through him or her get the desired introduction.
SCIENTIFIC.—Your own common sense ought to tell you that it is in the power of no earthly being to forestall future events.
SLEEPY HEAD.—The amount of sleep required by persons in good health is from six to eight hours. Old people and invalids require more.
HESPER.—Drop some quick-lime in the mouth of their nest, and wash it in with boiling water. Camphor in a cupboard will prevent their coming.
BENEDICT.—You must reside for twenty-one days in the district where the marriage is to take place, and give the same notice to the registrar.
JEANETTE.—Place the glove upon the hand, dip a piece of flannel into some cream, then rub it on some white curd soap; apply to the glove, and it will be like new.
MAX.—A "Press reader" is one who reads a proof of the types set up by the compositor, comparing the matter with the "copy" given to the compositor, to detect and correct any mistakes they may have made.

H. B.—Hold the flattened portion in the steam coming out of the spout of a kettle of boiling water, then raise it in the proper direction with the unfattened portion.

NEWLY MARRIED.—Marriage before the Superintendent Registrar is perfectly legal in every respect; but the parties may be re-married at a church if they desire it.

DOUBTFUL GRACE.—It would be wise for you to give the matter serious thought before you accept the hand of a gentleman whose religion is the opposite of your own.

WRATHFUL.—Under the ordinary form of hiring agreement he would be justified, on non-payment of the instalments, in removing the instrument and claiming arrears.

REGGIE.—The bronze coinage was introduced into this country in 1800. The bronze used is composed of ninety-five parts by weight of copper to four of tin and one of zinc.

CAUTION.—We are unable to say if the preparation contains any deleterious ingredients. A letter addressed to the wholesale agents would no doubt bring you a satisfactory reply.

TOM WRIGHT.—There is no standard of weight or height for a boy of eighteen. Some boys have their growth at that age, others do not get their full growth until they are past twenty-one.

HIGH NOON.

Time's finger on the dial of my life
 Points to high noon. And yet the half-spent day
 Leaves less than half remaining! For the dark
 Bleak shadows of the grave engulf the end.

To those who burn the candles in the stick,
 The spluttering socket yields the little light,
 Long life is sadder than an easy death.
 We cannot count on ravell'd threads of age
 Whereof we weave a fabric we must use
 The warp and woof the ready present yields,
 And toil while daylight lasts when I bethink
 How brief the past, the future still more brief
 Calls on to action, action! Not for me
 Is time for retrospection or for dreams;
 Not time for self-laudation, or remorse.
 Have I done nobly? Then I must not let
 Dead yesterday unborn to-morrow shame.
 Have I done wrong? Well, let the bitter taste
 Of fruit that turned to ashes on my lip
 Be my reminder in temptation's hour,
 And keep me silent when I would condemn.
 Sometimes it takes the acid of a sin
 To cleanse the clouded windows of our souls
 So pity may shine through them. Looking back,
 My faults and errors seem like stepping-stones
 That led the way to knowledge of the truth
 And made me value virtue. Sorrows shine
 In rainbow colours o'er the gulf of years
 Where the forgotten pleasures. Looking forth
 Out to the western sky, still bright with noon,
 I feel well spurred and bootied for the strife
 That ends not ill Nirvana is attained.

Battling with fate, with men, and with myself,
 Up the steep summit of my life's forenoon,
 Three things I learned—three things of precious
 worth,
 To grapple and help me down the western slope.
 I have learned how to pray, and toll, and save;
 To pray for courage to receive what comes,
 Knowing what comes to be divinely sent;
 To toll for universal good, since thus,
 And only thus can good come unto me;
 To save, by giving whatsoever I have
 To those who have not—this alone is gain.

GRETHA.—Gretha Green marriage was quite legal, and children issuing from it legitimate; they would succeed to estate in preference to children born of a subsequent marriage.

DESPERATION.—There is no known cure for neuralgia, but when it attacks the face it is always wise to let an experienced dentist ascertain whether the trouble is not caused by bad teeth.

M. C. C.—If a railway passenger can prove that he gave his luggage into the custody of one of the company's servants the company will be held liable in the value of the luggage if it is lost.

DREAMS.—Dreams are not matters of choice, and there is probably no way to induce pleasant ones. A careful diet and regular hours will probably do much to guard against disagreeable ones.

BUTTERFLY.—If you wish it to be publicly known you can insert an announcement in the newspapers stating that it is your intention to add the name to your present surname, but you are not bound to do this.

BROKEN HEARTED.—It is apparent that he wishes to transfer his affections from you to your sister; therefore it would be well for you to have an early and definite understanding on the matter with both him and her.

POSTMISTRESS.—If you died intestate the whole of your personal property passes to your husband. If your husband should die before half his property passes to you and the other half is divided equally among his blood relations. Why not make your will, and so settle the matter definitely?

ONE IN DIFFICULTY.—As the loss of your luggage appears to have been in no way caused by the negligence of the company's servants you cannot recover its value.

WORRIED MARY.—As to standing on street corners that has nothing to do with being a gentleman, unless he makes a practice of doing so. Then he is a loafer. Standing on a corner a few times indicates nothing, unless the man's conduct was wrong.

A. S. S.—Hang them up in a room, spread out and well exposed to the fumes of burning sulphur, as recently directed for the disinfection of rooms; all pictures with gilt frames should be removed from the walls, as the fumes would tarnish the gilding.

ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.—The expression is taken from the ball on which the knocker strikes. It has therefore been used as a comparison to one irretrievably dead—one visited with death, such as reiterated strokes on the head would naturally produce.

A. C. M.—Apply to the Agent-General for the Cape of Good Hope, Victoria-street, Westminster, and he will give you all particulars as to the Cape Mounted Rifles and Police. We believe recruiting in England for these forces has now ceased.

WRINKLES.—Wrinkles may come with loss of bodily vigour, brought on by poor feeding, or sleeping in badly-ventilated rooms; or they may be the result of short nights trying to do without spectacles; the "cure" is of course to remove the cause.

AN ANXIOUS FATHER.—Seven years' absence of the husband or wife from each other, without anything being heard of either in the mean time, is scarcely a good defence in an indictment for bigamy—nothing more. Marriage can only be dissolved by law, or by death.

FANCY FREE.—A man who suddenly transfers his attention from one young lady to another without any good reason, or for no reason at all, deserves and is likely to receive severe criticism. Certainly, he is an excellent person for sensible women to keep away from.

QUEEN MAB.—A great aid to beauty is after energetic exercise to rub the body well with dry flannels or towels. The effect of a course of exercise and rubbings will soon be visible in the softness and firmness of the skin, the firmness of the flesh, the reduction of superfluous fat, the improvement in the complexion and the lustre of the eyes.

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DOES EVERY BULLET HAVE ITS BILLET?

READING the newspaper accounts of a great battle one marvels how anybody came out of it alive. And yet what are the chances of being killed in battle? Take an example:—

The battle of Stone's River, during the Civil War in America, was a general engagement, and hotly contested on both sides. The Union army artillery fired 20,307 rounds of ammunition, weighing fully 225,000 pounds. The infantry fired over 2,000,000 rounds, weighing over 150,000 pounds; total weight of projectiles fired, 375,000 pounds. Yet only 2,319 of the Confederates were killed or mortally wounded by the same, which proves the truth of the military saying that *it takes a man's weight in lead to kill him in a battle*. This is an absolute official fact of all modern warfare. The reader can explain it for himself. "In our army," writes a Union (Northern) officer, "there were twice as many deaths from disease as from the fighting."

One moment now; don't jump to a wrong conclusion. If the whole human race were constantly at war we should be in the way of depopulating the earth. But, speaking broadly, war was always exceptional, and is becoming less common with every decade. The more we perfect the weapons and the art of war the less shall we fight. The reader may explain this, too, for himself.

But disease never grows weary, never proclaims a peace. Not steel and lead, therefore, but poisons bred under certain conditions within our own bodies, are the deadly foes of the human race. That is why a simple case like the following is more important than the history of an entire campaign.

"In August, 1889," says the narrator, "I met with an accident while mixing a preparation containing benzoline, and was so badly burned that it was necessary to take me to the infirmary for treatment. After this I became low, nervous, and depressed. My appetite fell away, and what little food I ate gave me great pain at the chest and sides. My breathing was short and laboured, and as I sat in the chair I almost gasped for air.

"Gradually my strength failed, and in a few weeks I found myself too feeble to attend to my work. Then I was so nervous that a mere knocking at the door would frighten and com-

pletely upset me. Instead of wearing itself out as I at first thought it might, my complaint nearly wore me out. Month after month it held on in spite of all we could do, until the siege of it lasted a year and a half. Even then it didn't leave me of its own accord. It was cured, as I am about to tell you.

"The doctor who attended me for several months said my ailment was nervous debility brought on by the shock I had when I was burned; but his medicines did me no good. In March, 1891, a friend, Mrs. Wilson, insisted that I should try Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup, and I got a bottle from Messrs. Jubb & Co., chemists, Chariot Street, and after taking it I was much better and stronger. My appetite returned, and I suffered no more pain or distress after eating. With the coming back of my strength my nerves got firm and steady, and I lived, as you may say, a new life. I have been in good health ever since, thanks to Mother Seigel.

"I ought to add that two years ago my grandson, Joseph Fox, nine years old, from being a healthy boy began to droop and waste away. He ate almost nothing, and had intense pain in the bowels. He lost flesh until he was a mere skeleton. The only nourishment he could take was milk, and only a teaspoonful at a time. The doctor said his bowels were ulcerated. No treatment relieved him. At last he lay at death's door, and several times we thought he was actually dying. As the doctor could do no good, I gave Joseph Mother Seigel's Syrup. In a day or two he was better, and in a week he could walk across the floor. After this I kept on giving him the Syrup, and he was soon well as ever. And I was not so much surprised, as I thought what had saved me would save him. And under Providence it did. (Signed) (Mrs.) Ann Elizabeth Mackay, 4, Sewer Lane, Hull, April 4th, 1895."

Victories of this kind are things to be proud of, and thankful for; victories not *through* suffering but *over* suffering; not by *means of death* but to *prevent death*. In such a war any of us may be (and are sure to be) stricken, for disease is everywhere. What, then, is the value of a remedy that has so often conquered it? Ay, and single-handed and alone.